



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



3 3433 07491025 2

PIRATES on the DOGGER-BANK



12^{mil}



NCW
Moore

1/2



AFLOAT ON THE DOGGER BANK



**THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY**

**ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS**

R

L

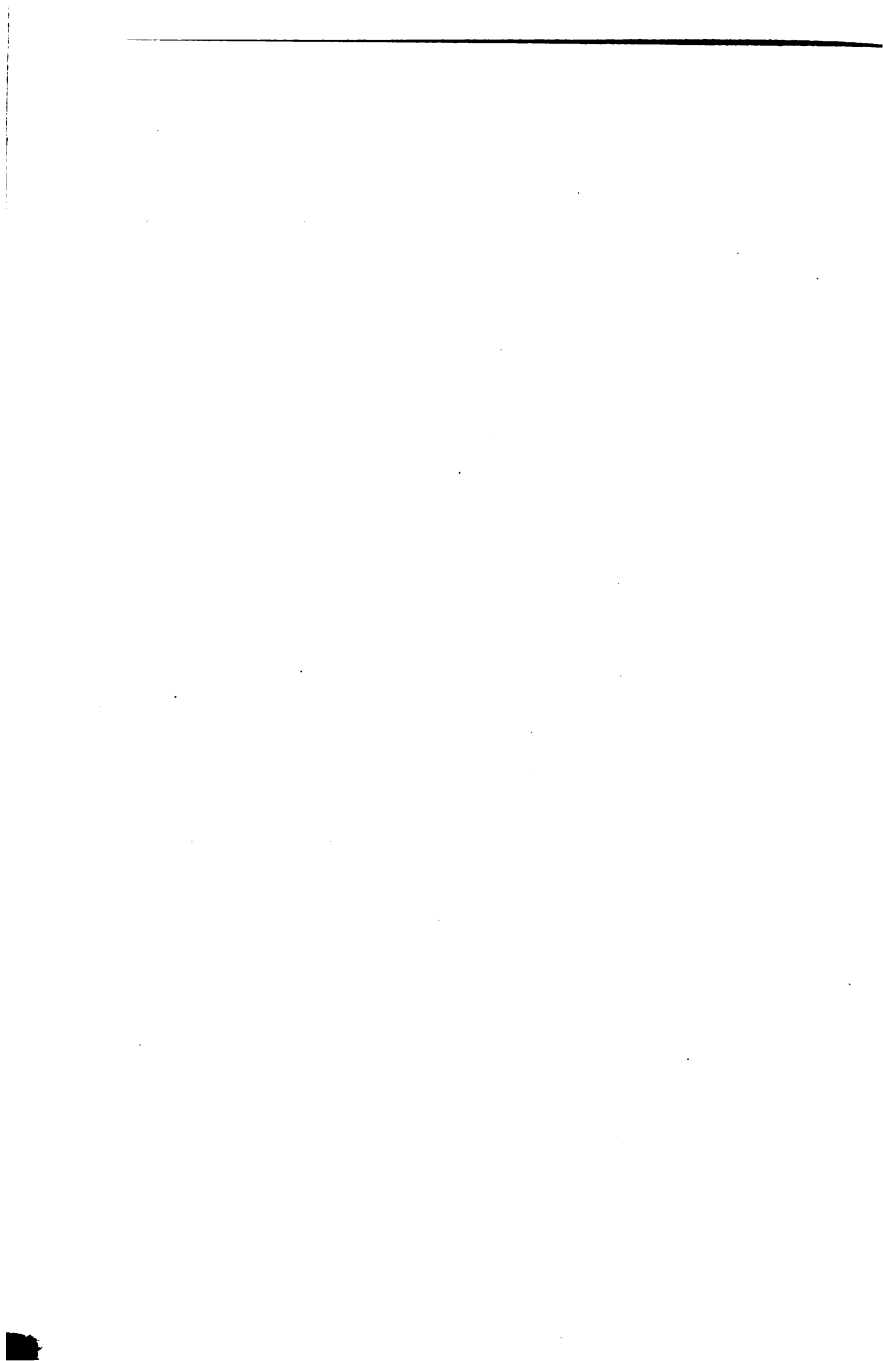


**"IT FELL WITH A CRASH ON THE BRIDGE, AND SPLASHED
THE SKIPPER'S TROUSERS."**

[REDACTED]

h

[REDACTED]



Afloat on the Dogger Bank

A STORY OF ADVENTURE IN THE NORTH
SEA AND IN CHINA

By H. C. MOORE
Author of "Britons at Bay," etc.

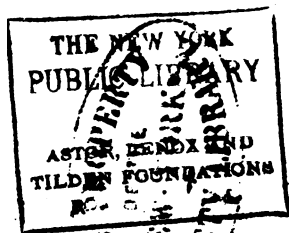
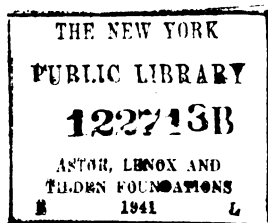
Illustrated by
J. PRATER



BOSTON
DANA ESTES & COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

c 1906



Copyright, 1906
BY DANA ESTES & COMPANY

All rights reserved

AFLOAT ON THE DOGGER BANK

COLONIAL PRESS
Electrotyped and Printed by C. H. Simonds & Co.
Boston, U. S. A.

APR 1 1957

JF

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
"IT FELL WITH A CRASH ON THE BRIDGE AND SPLASHED THE SKIPPER'S TROUSERS" <i>Frontispiece</i>	
"ONE OF THE FISHERMEN PREVENTED HIM FROM SNEEZING AGAIN"	69
"CHARLEY SCRAMBLED OVER THE GUNWALE"	85
"COME OVER HERE AND SURRENDER"	115
"CHARLEY FORGETTING HIS DISGUISE . . . RAISED HIS SKULL-CAP"	159
"THE MEN UNLOCKED THE COLLARS"	192
"AS CHARLEY PLANTED HIS FOOT ON THE LOWEST RUNG, THREE MEN CAME RUNNING UP"	271
"PING WANG EXHIBITED AN IMMENSE RUBY"	313



AFLOAT ON THE DOGGER BANK

CHAPTER I.

“ I WANT a North Sea fisherman’s outfit.”

“ Yes, sir,” the Grimsby shopkeeper answered, cheerfully, suspecting that his young, gentlemanly-looking customer required the things for a fancy-dress entertainment or theatricals. In two or three minutes he had produced for inspection a jersey, thick trousers, — commonly called “ fear-noughts,” — heavy top-boots, and a set of oilskins.

“ I will try them on,” the lad said, and, retiring behind a screen, changed his clothes. Then he looked round for a glass, anxious to satisfy himself that he had the appearance of a North Sea fisherman. The shopkeeper, unasked, assured him that he had, and, as

there was no one else there who could be consulted, the youth purchased the outfit.

“ Do my other things up in a parcel,” he said to the shopkeeper. “ I will keep these on.”

“ But it’s raining hard, sir,” the man exclaimed, not believing that his customer wanted the clothes for real use.

“ I don’t mind that at all. I want a little of the newness rubbed off. Now I come to think of it, I might just as well have had a second-hand outfit.”

The shopkeeper rustled the brown paper, and pretended that he had not heard what was said.

“ May I send it home? ” he asked when he had made a neat parcel of the suit, cap, and boots, which the boy had taken off.

“ Yes. I will write the address.”

When the bill had been paid, the lad stepped out into the dirty Grimsby street, and strode off in the direction of the docks.

The clothes *were* meant for use, after all.

Charlie Page — for that was the lad's name — was not going to a fancy-dress ball, but had purchased his fisherman's outfit because, on the following morning, he was to begin work as a deck-hand on board the steam trawler, *Sparrow-hawk*.

How it came about that he was bound for the Dogger Bank needs explanation. His father was a prosperous Lincolnshire man, who had built up a large export business, which was now about to be converted into a limited liability company. Mr. Page was to become managing director of the new company, but, unfortunately, he could find no suitable position in the concern for his son Charlie. He determined, therefore, to purchase, with a portion of the money which he would receive from the company, a new business for his son.

He had heard that there were three Grimsby steam trawlers for sale, and entered into correspondence with the respective owners. The price which they asked for the

trawlers was not high if they really earned what it was asserted they did, but Mr. Page had a strong suspicion that the amount of their profits was exaggerated.

“ Shall I go to Grimsby and discover the truth? ” Charlie said to his father one evening rather suddenly. “ I might get a job on one of those three trawlers, and keep a sharp lookout all the while I was aboard her. I could count the boxes of fish, and get all the information that I could from the crew.”

“ A good idea, my boy, but do you think that you could carry it out? A North Sea fisherman’s life is a terribly rough one. It would not be a pleasure-trip for you.”

There was a great deal of discussion before Charlie’s daring plan was finally adopted. Mr. Page was struck by his son’s grit and keenness, and knew, moreover, that the experience would do him good. In his own young days, before he returned to Lincolnshire and settled down to business, Mr. Page had spent three eventful years in South

America, and although he had had many decidedly unpleasant adventures, he by no means regretted them. He was glad, too, to find that his son inherited some of his love of adventure, especially as it was to be used, in this case, for a good, sensible purpose. Charlie was only sixteen, but he was big and strong for his age, and the sea air and hard life would probably do him good physically as well as morally.

“I will give you ten pounds,” he said to Charlie on the following morning, “and as you are not likely to be away much more than a week, it will, I think, be ample for your wants.”

Charlie thanked him heartily, and an hour or two later started for Grimsby. He knew the town well, and making his way to the docks, had little difficulty in finding where the *Sparrow-hawk* lay. She was coaling when he discovered her, and knowing that all hands would be busy, he sat down on the black scaffold-like dock and watched from

a distance as truck after truck was tilted over, sending its load of coal into the chute, down which it ran with a rattle on to the ship's deck. The trawler's men, black as niggers, shovelled the coal quickly into the hold. Fortunately, the greater portion of the load had been taken aboard before Charlie arrived, and after waiting for about half an hour, he saw the last truck-load shot down. He knew then that in about an hour's time some of the *Sparrow-hawk's* men would be coming ashore. He watched them with interest as, having shovelled all the coal into the hold, they turned the hose on the deck, and with brooms and swabs worked hard to remove the coal-dust which coated everything. When this task was finished, the men gathered around two buckets and washed themselves. They needed washing badly.

The first two men who came ashore had friends waiting for them, so that Charlie had no opportunity of speaking to them. The third man to come ashore had no one waiting

for him. He was a short, bow-legged little man, with a goatee beard and a small brass ring in the lobe of each ear. Charlie spoke to him.

"Thank you, sir," the man answered, as he took the tobacco which Charlie offered. "Smoking is not allowed here, so I will save it till I get outside the gates."

"Are you a Grimsby man?" Charlie asked.

"No fear. I come from Gorleston. If this was Yarmouth I should be able to enjoy myself at home, but as it's Grimsby I don't expect to have much of an evening."

Charlie felt that he had come across the very man he wanted.

"Come to my hotel and have a chat," he suggested. "I want some information about North Sea fishermen."

"Certainly, sir. Are you a journalist?"

The bow-legged fisherman had a great respect for journalists, having on one occasion received from a newspaper representa-

tive a good big "tip" for describing how a trawler worked.

Charlie could not, however, by the greatest stretch of imagination, call himself a journalist, and so he ignored the question put to him. The fisherman put his silence down to modesty.

The hotel at which Charlie had taken a room was close to the docks, and, therefore, the manager and waiters were not horrified, as they would have been at a London hotel, at seeing a rough fisherman brought into the building.

After Charlie had seen that the man had some food, they went to his sitting-room.

"I'm happy now, sir," the fisherman declared, having lighted a pipe and thrown himself back into a roomy chair.

For a few minutes there was silence. Then Charlie said, "I should very much like to make a trip to the North Sea on a steam trawler."

"I should not advise you to do so, sir. A trawler is no place for a gentleman."

"Nevertheless, I mean to go out in one."

"Ah! I see your game, sir. You have heard what a rough time we fellows have in the North Sea, and you have come down here to get information, and then put it in a London newspaper. But it's no good, sir. There's no skipper in the North Sea who wouldn't guess what you were up to, and make some excuse for not taking you aboard his ship. You must give up the idea, sir."

"I mean to get a job on a trawler, and go to sea as an ordinary fisherman. Then I shall be able to obtain, from personal observation, all the information I want."

The bow-legged fisherman sat up in his chair deeply interested.

"That's a splendid idea, sir," he declared, "and I only wish you could get a job on the *Sparrow-hawk*, for you would see enough on that trawler to make you write till you

wore out your pen. The skipper is an old villain, and that crafty, too — ”

The bow-legged fisherman did not finish his speech, but nodded his head, and raised his hands in horror, as if words were too weak to express the real character of the skipper. Naturally, Charlie became more anxious than ever to make a trip on the *Sparrow-hawk*.

“ Can’t I get a job on her? ” he asked.

“ No, sir. All the same hands are taken on for the next trip.”

“ Couldn’t I bribe one of them to stay away, and let me go aboard in his place? ”

“ Pretending that you are he? ”

“ Yes.”

“ ’Course you could. Take my place, sir.”

“ I am afraid that is not possible,” Charlie remarked, thinking of the fisherman’s bow legs and goatee beard.

“ Why not? It isn’t hard to pretend you are bandy-legged. Lots of boys pretend they are bandy-legged when they see me coming.”

“ It would be rather tiring to have to continue the pretence for two or three weeks. Moreover, I haven’t a beard.”

“ You could say you had shaved it off.”

“ That would mean that I should have to shave nothing every morning, just to keep up the deception. If I didn’t, the crew would wonder why my beard didn’t grow. But, joking apart, I am very anxious to make a trip in the *Sparrow-hawk*, and if you, at the last moment, will pretend that you are too ill to go aboard, and will send me as a substitute, I will pay you your wages, and give you a present as well.”

“ I agree, sir,” the fisherman declared, promptly.

“ When does the *Sparrow-hawk* sail? ” Charlie asked.

“ In two days’ time.”

“ Then I must buy my outfit to-morrow. Where shall I meet you to-morrow afternoon? ”

“ At the Fishermen’s Home, sir.”

“Very well. I will be there at four o’clock, and here is half a sovereign for you, to show that I am in earnest.”

“Thank you, sir,” the fisherman exclaimed, and departed, more than ever convinced that journalists were the most generous fellows in the world.

CHAPTER II.

FROM the clothes shop Charlie went to the Fishermen's Home, where he found his bow-legged friend.

"Well," Charlie said, when they were alone, "what do you think of my rig-out?"

"No good at all, sir," the fisherman declared.

"Why not?" Charlie asked, somewhat astonished.

"Because, when you are cooking, the fewer things you have on the better you work. When you have a oven each side of you —"

"Are you a cook, then?" Charlie interrupted.

"Yes, sir."

"Then why did you not tell me so? I can't go aboard the *Sparrow-hawk* as a cook,

for I have never cooked anything but chest-nuts in my life."

"That doesn't matter, sir. North Sea fishermen are not very particular. The great thing to remember is always to serve up a meal at the proper time. If it isn't done, don't keep them waiting, but let them have it underdone. Never let your fire go out day or night, and always keep your kettle boiling."

"Do the fellows ever want pudding?"

"Plum duff three times a week."

"I shall have to give up the job, then, for I couldn't make plum duff to save my life."

"That's just what I used to say when I first went as cook aboard ship, but I had a shot at it, and a nice mess I made of it. But when I come home from that trip I gave another cook a shilling to teach me how to make a few fancy things, and now I'm thought as good a cook as any in the North Sea."

“ But you know how to make plum duff. I don’t.”

“ I will tell you. When I discovered how to make anything, I put the particulars down in writing in a little book. I will lend you the book.”

The bow-legged cook put his hand in his pocket and drew out a grimy, paper-covered note-book.

“ Plum duff comes first,” he said, as he handed the book to Charlie. “ Can you read it? ”

“ There are a few words which I can’t quite understand,” Charlie replied, for the cookery-book was an extraordinary work. The writing was bad, the spelling was worse, and the abbreviations were confusing. But the cook went right through the book with him then and there.

“ Now you’ll be able to cook anything,” he declared, when they had got to the end.

“ I’m not so sure of that,” Charlie answered; “ but anyhow, I shall have some

idea of how to set to work. What time tomorrow shall I have to be aboard? ”

“ At six in the morning.”

“ Won’t the skipper discover me before we get out of the river? ”

“ No. He doesn’t often pop his head into the galley. Anyhow, he cannot do without a cook, and if he does see you, he won’t turn you off when he finds that I am not aboard. I will write a letter to the mate for you to give him, and perhaps he won’t say a word to the skipper about you. Don’t you worry yourself, you will be all right.”

Charlie slept that night in the Fishermen’s Home. He had a clean and comfortable bed for ninepence, and a good breakfast for a few coppers. The bow-legged cook met him in the morning outside the Home, and gave him a letter to the mate.

“ It took me two hours to write,” he declared, “ and when I finished it I didn’t think it was worth while going to sleep. But that doesn’t matter; I shall get plenty of sleep

during the next few weeks. I'm going to live like a gentleman for a time."

Charlie smiled, and drew his purse out of his pocket. "Here is three pounds," he said. "The other three I will give you when I return."

"Suppose you don't return, sir? Accidents happen at sea as well as on land. If you got washed overboard, should I lose my three pounds?"

"Oh, no. I have written to my father, telling him the agreement I have made with you, and if I should not return he will pay you the money. Here is his address."

"Thank you, sir, very much," the cook answered. "And now, as it's a quarter to six, you had better hurry off to the *Sparrowhawk*. Light the fire and put the kettle on it directly you get aboard. The chaps will want some tea long before they have their breakfast."

"I'll remember," Charlie promised; "good-by." And with his bundle of belong-

ings on his shoulder, he hurried off to where the *Sparrow-hawk* lay.

“Where is the mate?” Charlie inquired of a boy who looked at him sharply as he went aboard the *Sparrow-hawk*.

“For’ard,” the boy answered.

Charlie went for’ard, and seeing a man standing with his arms folded, watching three men who were working hard, concluded rightly that he was the mate, and handed him the cook’s letter.

“Who is it from?” the mate asked.

“The cook, sir,” Charlie answered.

The mate tore open the envelope and glanced at the letter. “He wrote it with a toasting-fork, I should think,” the mate declared, after looking at it for a few moments. “He says he is ill. At any rate, he has not turned up. So you’re his substitute? Well, take your things below and get into the galley sharp. I want a mug of tea as soon as possible.”

Charlie went down into the foc’s’le—a

small, dark, stifling place where eight men slept. The thought of having to spend his nights in that dirty, close den made him half-inclined to jump ashore before the boat started. Quickly overcoming the thought, he set to work to discover which was his bunk, and while he was searching for some sign that would help him to settle the matter, a Chinaman came below. He was dressed in ordinary North Sea fishermen's clothes, and his pigtail was wound tightly round the top of his head. Charlie mistook his natural expression for a friendly smile, and therefore smiled in return.

"Which is the cook's bunk?" he asked immediately, and the Chinaman pointed it out to him.

The Chinaman watched Charlie as he stowed his things away and donned his cook's apron. Then he exclaimed suddenly: "You no sailor-man!"

Charlie looked at the Chinaman in surprise. "How can you tell?" he asked.

“Never mind,” the Chinaman answered, now smiling in reality; “me no tellee any one. Me likee you first chop.”

Charlie’s knowledge of “pidgin” English was slight, but he concluded that “first chop” meant “very much,” and was pleased to find that he had made one friend so quickly.

“My name Ping Wang,” the Chinaman continued, “but sailor-men callee me Chinee. Skipper Dlummond welly bad man. Callee me tellible bad names. Good morning; no can stop.”

Ping Wang went on deck, and a few moments later Charlie followed and hurried to the galley, where his difficulties commenced. In spite of all his efforts he could not light the fire, and, remembering the bow-leg cook’s injunction to keep the kettle always boiling, he began to think that he was making a very bad start. He left the galley in order to ask one of the men to show him how to make the fire burn, and met Ping Wang.

“ Can tellee me how lightee fire? ” Charlie asked.

Ping Wang nodded his head, popped into the galley, and pointed out to Charlie that he had omitted to pull out the damper. Then he relaid the fire, and, when he lighted it, it burned up quickly.

“ You no sailor-man; you no cook! ” Ping Wang whispered merrily, and then hurried away.

“ Ping Wang and I will get on very well together,” Charlie said to himself as he filled the huge kettle with water. The kettle boiled quickly, and almost immediately after the ship had left the dock the mate’s mug of tea was ready.

“ Have you given the skipper any? ” the mate asked; and when Charlie replied “ No,” he exclaimed, “ You had better be quick and take him some, then.”

Charlie filled another mug with tea and took it up on the bridge, but, just as he reached the top step of the ladder, he stum-

bled, and, to prevent himself from falling, dropped the mug. It fell with a crash on the bridge, and the tea splashed the skipper's shore trousers, which he had not yet changed.

Skipper Drummond, a short, stout, ill-tempered fellow, was thoroughly disliked by every one who knew him. He glared at Charlie for a moment as if he had committed some terrible offence, and then shouted fiercely, "What did you do that for, you idiot?"

"It was an accident," Charlie answered, bluntly, indignant at being abused.

"Saying it was an accident won't mend the mug."

"I will pay for a new one," Charlie rather unwisely replied.

"Pay for it, will you? So we have got a millionaire aboard, I suppose. I wonder you ever came to sea. Why did you? Do the police want you?"

Feeling that if he remained on the bridge he might speak his mind too freely, Charlie

turned to go, but the skipper called him back.

“ Come here, you ape! ” he shouted. “ Do you think I am going to pick up these pieces? Gather them up and throw them over-board.”

As soon as Charlie had filled another mug with tea, he hurried back to the bridge.

“ You have been a fine long time getting this,” the skipper declared, anxious to resume bullying. But Charlie was determined not to give him an occasion for faultfinding, and therefore he made no reply; but as he walked back to his galley, he vowed to himself that, do what he might, the skipper should not have the satisfaction of making him miserable. Already he had come to the conclusion that the man was dishonorable, and was more than ever determined to find out to what extent he hoped to defraud his father. He found that the galley contained very few cooking utensils, but the need of them was not likely to be felt that voyage, as

the provisions consisted almost entirely of tinned meats. There was not even one joint of fresh or salted meat aboard. Charlie, therefore, did not have much difficulty in preparing the dinner, as each tin of provisions bore instructions for the cooking of its contents. Punctually at one o'clock he took a plate of mock-turtle soup to the skipper, who was then in his cabin under the bridge.

As Charlie entered, the skipper glanced at his watch hanging on a nail at the side of his bunk; but, finding that he could not abuse him on the ground of being late, he contented himself with scowling. But, a few moments later, he pretended that he had a real cause for complaint.

When Charlie returned with the next course the skipper said, sharply: "Look here, young fellow, don't you be so generous with other people's things. There is enough meat for two men here. I'll eat it this time, but remember I won't have any waste on this

trawler. I know exactly what provisions you have, and if they go too quickly, I shall give you in charge for robbery. So just you be careful."

Charlie had not given the skipper a very big allowance of food, and was naturally surprised at the reprimand which he had received. Had he known that the skipper had a private stock of provisions, kept under lock and key in his cabin, he would not have been surprised at his small appetite.

"Can I bring you anything more, sir?" Charlie asked.

"No," the skipper replied, "and don't you come bothering for these things until after two o'clock."

That order was given so that Charlie should not return until he had removed all traces of his private provisions.

Glad to have finished for a time with the skipper, Charlie, with the aid of the ship's boy, carried the men's food to the foc's'le. There was no mock-turtle soup for them, but

simply tinned meat, boiled and floating in brown liquid.

The crew of the *Sparrow-hawk* were a brutal, low-minded set of men, and their conversation sickened Charlie even more than the discomfort of his life; so, after swallowing a few mouthfuls of the food, he went on deck, and, going aft, sat down on a coil of rope to think.

When he had been there about ten minutes Ping Wang joined him.

"This is the first time you have been to sea on a trawler," the Chinaman declared as he sat down beside him.

"How do you know?" Charlie asked, astounded to find that Ping Wang could speak excellent English.

"I could see that you were surprised at the way in which the men eat and talked. If you had known that they behaved in that manner, you would not have come to sea."

"That is very likely," Charlie admitted.

“ Why have you come? ” Ping Wang inquired.

“ One must do something for a living.”

“ You could have got a better job ashore. I am certain of that. You have come to sea for fun.”

“ If I had, I fancy that I should be disappointed.”

“ The skipper has been bullying you, I suppose. He bullies every one.”

“ Yes, he has been bullying me, but I will let him know very soon that I won't stand much of it.”

“ I advise you not to quarrel with him. I should not have come aboard this trip had I known that he was coming. He told us last voyage that that was his last trip.”

“ Where did he expect to be? In jail? ”

“ No,” the Chinaman answered, smiling; “ he said that he was going to retire. He was going to sell the trawler to some rich old fellow who knows nothing about such things. The mate told me that the skipper

hopes to get half as much again as the trawler was worth. Last trip he cut down expenses, and he is doing the same again now, so that the gentleman who is buying her will think the cost of running a trawler is less than it is. We are a hand short this trip."

"Is the trawler a sound boat?"

"This is the only one I have ever been on, but the fellows on the foc's'le say that she is the rottenest trawler on the North Sea. The engines are patched up, and they have to be very careful of them."

"Then the skipper intends to swindle the man over the sale of her?"

"Of course he does."

"I hope that the man won't buy her."

"So do I, but the skipper is confident that he will. If he doesn't, the skipper's temper will be worse than ever next voyage. I shall take very good care not to make another trip with him."

"Do you like a fisherman's life?"

"No. I dislike it very much indeed."

“ Then why are you aboard this ship? ”

“ Did you not tell me that one must do something for a living? ”

“ That is true; but, at the same time, I cannot understand why an educated Chinaman should travel so many thousands of miles to become a fisherman.”

“ I came to England to make my fortune,” Ping Wang declared. “ I thought that when I got to London, I should be able, having an English education, to get employment in the office of some merchant doing business with China. But I soon found that nobody wanted me. The only offers I received were not to my liking. One was a place in a laundry, and the other was to stand outside a tea merchant’s and distribute bills. No one seemed to think that it was possible for a Chinaman to be a gentleman, or to have any self-respect. At last, when all my money was gone, I got a job as steward on board a pleasure boat. The owner became bankrupt, and I was paid off at Yarmouth. I walked

from Yarmouth to Grimsby, and, after I had been hanging about the docks for a few days, the skipper of this boat took me on."

"Then he is not such a heartless brute as I imagined," Charlie remarked.

"It was not out of compassion that he took me," Ping Wang answered. "He said that as I had never been on a trawler, he would have to give me small wages. After I had been at sea three days I could do my work as well as any of the other men, but I only received half the wages that they did. He knew very well that I should be able to do my work after a few days' practice, and by taking me on he made a saving in his wages bill. This trip he is giving me three-quarters of what he pays the other men. We were only in dock for two or three days, and I had no time to find another job, but I have made up my mind never to go to sea again on a trawler, even if I have to starve. When we get back to Grimsby I shall go to London, and see if the Chinese Embassy or the Home for

Asiatics will pay my passage home. I am afraid, however, that they will not believe my story of being able to repay them, and I do not desire charity. In fact, now I come to think of it, it would be very foolish of me to tell my story to the people at the Embassy."

"Is it, then, such a wonderful story?"

"An Englishman would think so, but a Chinaman would not."

For a few minutes Ping Wang was deep in thought, and Charlie got up to look at a passing Norwegian ship. When he returned to his seat on the coil of rope, Ping Wang said to him suddenly: "Have you any Chinese friends?"

"No."

"Have you any English friends living in China?"

"No."

Ping Wang gave a slight sigh of relief.

"Then, if you will promise not to repeat

what I tell you," he said, " you shall hear my story."

" I promise," Charlie answered. " But I hope that you are not going to tell me any anti-European plots."

CHAPTER III.

“WHAT I am going to tell you,” Ping Wang began, “is purely a family matter. It is the reason why I left China. My father was the mandarin of Kwang-ngan, and although he did not become a Christian, he was very friendly with the English missionaries, and when I was quite a little boy he asked them to teach me all the things which English boys were taught. When I was ten years old I was sent to a school at Hongkong, kept by an Englishman, and I remained there until I was eighteen. That, of course, accounts for my speaking English fairly well. When I was eighteen my father sent for me. But I found Chinese manners and customs were not pleasing to me after so many years among English people. Therefore I asked

my father to permit me to return to Hong-kong and become a merchant. He was considering the matter, and I believe that he would have given his consent, when he was seized by Chin Choo's orders and executed. He was unpopular with the authorities at Peking. The mandarin of every town has to squeeze as much money as he possibly can out of his people and send in to the authorities. My father was a kind-hearted man, and as he did not squeeze his people so much as most mandarins, he did not send so much money to the Imperial coffers as the authorities wished. Twice they reprimanded him, and Chin Choo, who lived at Kwang-ngan, hearing of this, went to Peking and asserted that my father retained for his own use the greater part of the money which he had squeezed out of the people. The high officials believed this false tale, and, having received bribes from Chin Choo, empowered him to have my father executed and succeed him as mandarin. My mother and brother were

also killed, and our house burnt to the ground. Fortunately for me, I was not in the town at the time, and, hearing what had taken place, I started off at once for Hong-kong. Of course, it was useless for me to attempt to get Chin Choo punished, for such events are of frequent occurrence in parts of my poor country. So, having a little money, which I obtained by selling some jewelry which I possessed, I took a passage to England. What has happened to me since I have already told you."

"It is a very sad story," Charlie declared, feelingly; "and I am exceedingly sorry for you. But what surprises me is, that after having suffered so much in your native land you should think of returning to it."

"I will tell you my reason. Chin Choo confiscated all our property, but I hope to be able to recover a very valuable portion of it. Before our house was burnt to the ground, everything that it contained was removed to Chin Choo's residence. Among

“Hurry up!” the skipper growled, and kicked him.

In a moment Charlie was on his feet. “You wretched little bully!” he said to the skipper. “If you ill-treat that man again, I will knock you down.”

“You dare to threaten me on my own ship!” the skipper shouted, white with rage. “I’m the skipper, and I’ll let you know it. I’ll clap you in irons if you give me any of your back answers.”

“Why not try kicking me instead?”

“I’ll give you in charge for mutiny when we get back to Grimsby.”

“I shouldn’t be in a hurry to enter a police court, if I were you. Prosecutors are sometimes asked unpleasant questions.”

The chief engineer at that moment came up from the engine-room.

“Skipper, I want a word with you,” he said.

“Right you are,” the skipper replied, and walked over to him, well pleased to bring

his argument with Charlie to an end. Charlie was not really a very formidable opponent for a grown man, but Skipper Drummond, like many bullies, was a great coward.

Charlie, left alone, resumed his seat on the ropes, and, forgetting for a time the skipper's existence, spent a pleasant half-hour in thinking over the story which Ping Wang had related to him.

About three hours after the quarrel, the *Sparrow-hawk* arrived at the "Dogger," a submarine bank, the nearest point of which is about sixty miles from England. It is one hundred and seventy miles long and seventy miles broad.

"We shall shoot in an hour's time," the mate said to Charlie, "and you must give us a hand."

"Whom are you going to shoot?" Charlie inquired, jokingly.

"I know whom you would like to shoot—the skipper. He has taken a dislike to you,

and tells me that you are the biggest scoundrel he ever had aboard."

The mate smiled as he spoke, and added, after a few moments' interval: "The skipper is a queer customer, and, if you take my advice, you will do all you can to please him. Anyhow, he says that you are to give a hand when we shoot and when we haul the trawl."

"I am to be fisherman as well as cook. Is he going to pay me double wages?"

"You had better ask him. Got a mug of tea handy?"

Charlie had, and he gave it to him.

"We shall want tea again after shooting," the mate said to Charlie as he replaced the mug on the hook.

Leaving the big kettle on the stove, Charlie went out to witness the preparations for beginning fishing, and was just in time to see the men anchor a small buoy, fitted with a light and a flag. This was anchored so that the *Sparrow-hawk*, by keeping it in sight,

should not wander away from the fishing-ground. They were in about twenty-six fathoms of water, and, if they lost sight of the buoy, they would probably steam into deeper water, and the net would then be unable to reach the bottom. By day the fishermen keep within sight of the buoy-flag; by night they watch the buoy-light. In fishing fleets, when some twenty or thirty steam trawlers belong to one firm, an old smack called a "mark-ship" is anchored on the fishing-ground. It can be seen for many miles in daylight, and by night its whereabouts is made known by rockets fired from it. But "single boaters," such as the *Sparrow-hawk*, have to rely on their own little flag and light buoys.

When the *Sparrow-hawk* had anchored her buoy she steamed off, and, punctually at five o'clock, "shot her gear," or, in plainer language, lowered her big triangular fishing-net. This having been done without a hitch, the men had their tea. Charlie took his in the

galley, having determined to spend as little time as possible in the foc's'le. He had discovered that the crew of the *Sparrow-hawk* was composed of the black sheep of Grimsby and Hull. They were men whom no decent North Sea skipper would have had on his boat. On nearly all the trawlers working out of Yarmouth, Grimsby, and Hull, the men are fine, manly, thoroughbred Englishmen, facing danger fearlessly and uncomplainingly year in and year out. Drunkenness is almost unknown among them, and bad language is rarely heard. If Charlie had been on almost any other boat than the *Sparrow-hawk* he would have thoroughly enjoyed sitting at the foc's'le table, having a chat with the men. But to save a few pounds the skipper had engaged, at low wages, men who were known to be bad characters, and who could not, therefore, get a job on any other trawler. Skipper Drummond had himself been discharged for drunkenness by the owners of a fleet in whose employ he had been

for some years. Where he got the money from to purchase a trawler was a mystery to most people, although it was discovered later that a betting man was in partnership with him.

Charlie, being satisfied that the skipper intended to make an attempt to swindle his father, was anxious to get back to Lincoln as speedily as possible to make known what he had discovered. He had forgotten to ask the bow-legged cook how long the *Sparrowhawk* would remain at sea, and could, therefore, form no idea of when he would get home.

While Charlie was regretting his ignorance of trawlers' movements, Ping Wang appeared at the galley door.

"Well," Charlie said, "has the skipper said anything more to you?"

"No," Ping Wang answered, smilingly; "I believe you have frightened him. But he will pay you out somehow or other."

"I hope, for his own sake, that he won't

attempt to, for I hate the little fellow already, and if he interferes with me unnecessarily I will give him a sound thrashing."

"He is very strong," Ping Wang remarked, warningly.

"Can he do this?" Charlie asked, catching hold of a bucket full of water and holding it easily at arm's length straight from the shoulder.

Ping Wang made no reply, but gazed at Charlie in astonishment. Charlie was lightly built, and Ping Wang had no idea that he was so strong. But he had gone in for a course of physical development exercises before coming to Grimsby, and was in fine condition.

"If the skipper thinks, as I did, that you are not very strong," he said at last, "he will be very surprised."

"Well," Charlie said, rather pleased at the astonishment he had caused, "let us forget him for a time. When do we return to Grimsby?"

“ In three or four days.”

“ So soon? I thought we were out for three weeks, at the least. I had an idea that steam trawlers always remained out for three weeks.”

“ Boats belonging to the fleets do. A steam carrier collects the boxes of fish from them every morning, and carries them off to London. But single boaters have to take in their own fish to Grimsby, and therefore they have to run in every few days, or else the fish wouldn't be fresh.”

“ Then I sha'n't have to endure the skipper for as long as I expected.”

“ You'll have to endure him for seven or eight weeks, I'm afraid. When we run in just to land fish we are not allowed to quit the ship. After unloading we sail as soon as possible.”

“ But do you mean to say that he can prevent my leaving the ship at Grimsby? ”

“ I believe he can. You see, if men were

allowed to leave whenever they liked, the fishing industry would soon be upset."

"I didn't think of that. However, I will get a substitute if possible. There will be no objection to that, I suppose?"

"I don't know. The skipper is a curious kind of fellow, and he may refuse to let you go, so that he may have the pleasure of bullying you. Why don't you pretend that you are ill? He would put you ashore very soon then."

"I don't like the idea of getting out of an unpleasant position in that way. By the bye, how do you pass the time away before hauling the trawl?"

"Some of the men turn in, and others play cards or draughts. Do you care about draughts?"

"Oh, yes, but I won't go down in the foc's'le to play."

"I will bring the board up here if it is not being used."

Ping Wang hurried away, and returned in a minute or two with the draughts.

“ They are having a singsong in the foc’s’le,” he said. “ The skipper is there, and is a little bit the worse for drink.”

CHAPTER IV.

CHARLIE won the first game at draughts, and they had just begun a second when the skipper suddenly appeared at the galley door. His face was flushed, and there was a wild look in his eyes.

“The galley is not the place for playing draughts,” he said, and with his hand swept the pieces off the board.

Charlie and Ping Wang made no remark. It was plain to them that he had paid that visit for the sole purpose of bullying them, and they were wondering what his next complaint would be.

“I want a mug of tea,” he said, seeing that the kettle was not boiling.

Charlie put the kettle on the fire at once.

“That’s the result of playing draughts

when you ought to be at work," the skipper growled. "I always want some tea at this time."

"In future it shall be ready, sir," Charlie replied, calmly.

"Future — eh? — I want it now. What's that Chineese doing here?"

"I thought you noticed that Ping Wang was playing draughts with me."

"You're not paid to think. I do that for all the crew."

Then the skipper turned his attention to prying into the pots and pans, to see if he could discover anything which would give him an opportunity to find fault. To his evident annoyance he did not succeed in discovering anything, for Charlie had done his work thoroughly, and the cooking utensils looked much cleaner than when he entered on his duties.

In a few minutes the tea was ready, and as soon as the skipper tasted it he made a grimace, and exclaimed, "Beastly wash! Do

you hear? ” he exclaimed, finding that Charlie did not speak. “ It’s wash! ”

“ It is made in exactly the same way as the other tea you have had during the day,” Charlie declared.

“ Then I must have drunk wash before. But I won’t drink this. Here, Chinee, you drink it.”

“ Me no want any, skipper,” Ping Wang answered.

“ Don’t want it, eh? What does that matter? Drink it at once.”

Ping Wang shook his head, and the skipper immediately flung the contents of his mug full in the Chinaman’s face. The tea was very hot, and with a cry of pain Ping Wang ran at his tormentor. Stepping backwards quickly, to avoid him, the skipper stumbled over the weather-board at the entrance to the galley, and fell heavily on to the deck.

The mate, who had been pacing the deck, ran to pick him up. “ What’s the matter, skipper? ” he asked.

"That Chineese has knocked me down," the skipper declared.

"He did nothing of the kind," Charlie declared, and related to the mate exactly what happened.

"You'd better get an hour or two's sleep before we haul," the mate said to the skipper, and, taking his arm, led him away.

"I think we had better turn in also," Ping Wang said, and Charlie at once went forward with him.

The other men were already asleep. The ventilators were all closed, and the foc's'le was so close and stuffy that Charlie thought, at first, that he would have to go on deck again. But, being very tired, he determined to stay where he was, and clambered into his bunk. He slept soundly, in spite of the bad air, until Ping Wang aroused him. It was a quarter to eleven, and the men were donning their oilskins, with a view to hauling.

"You had better put the kettle on," Ping

Wang said to Charlie; "all hands will want tea before they turn in again."

Charlie, wearing his oilskins, went to the galley at once. As he passed along the deck he shivered, for a breeze had sprung up, and the air struck cold, after the stuffiness of the foc's'le.

Much to his relief, Charlie found that the galley fire had not gone out.

"I kept it going, cook," a grimy young trimmer declared. "It would have gone out long ago if I hadn't looked after it. And I've filled the kettle for you. Got a bit of grub to give me?"

Charlie took out a chunk of bread, dabbed a spoonful of marmalade on top of it, and gave it to the lad.

"Any time you want anything done, I'll do it," the trimmer declared, and departed.

As there was nothing to detain Charlie in the galley he went forward to assist in hauling. The skipper was on the bridge; the mate was working the donkey-engine, which

was fast drawing in the long wire ropes attached to the net, and the deck hands stood at the starboard-side gunwale, watching for the net to appear. An electric light was hung up at the bridge, so that the men could see to do the work they had in hand. For a moment or two Charlie stood at the foot of the bridge, waiting for the skipper or the mate to tell him what to do.

“Stand here,” Ping Wang said, quietly, but loud enough for him to hear.

Charlie nodded his head and took up his position about three feet away from the Chinaman. Soon the net appeared above water, and the men, bending over the gunwale, grasped it with their hands, and, tugging all together, pulled it slowly but surely upwards.

“Where are the fish?” Charlie asked, surprised at seeing none in the part of the net at which they had been tugging.

“For’ard,” Ping Wang answered, and as he spoke the donkey-engine started panting

and puffing, and the part of the net to which the Chinaman had pointed was now raised high above the gunwale. It resembled a huge cooking-net which had been lifted out of a gigantic pan. It was crowded with fish, and as it was pulled in and suspended over the pound made on the deck, the very small fish, mostly dead, fell through. Others, with wide-opened mouths, were caught in the meshes. A fisherman now stepped under the dripping net, untied it at the bottom, and sprang quickly aside as the catch of fish fell with a thud into the pound.

“ What a mixture! ” Charlie exclaimed as he gazed at the fish jumping, wriggling, and sliding about in the pound. “ What are they? ”

“ Cod, plaice, haddock, and turbot,” Ping Wang replied, but he only named a few of them. The catch included also ling, sole, whiting, dab, gurnet, oysters, crabs, whelks, catfish, starfish, and a large amount of ocean scrapings.

Charlie stood watching the struggling mass, deeply interested, but Ping Wang whispered to him, "Come away, or you'll have the skipper at you. We are going to shoot now."

Charlie bestirred himself at once, and assisted in shooting the gear. When that had been done without a hitch, the work of sorting, cleaning, and packing the fish was begun. Three men stepped into the pound, trampling on the fish until they had made a clear space for their feet.

"Give a hand there, cook!" the skipper shouted, and Charlie stepped into the pound. He had not the heart to tread on the still living fish as the others were doing, and in his anxiety to avoid hurting them, he slipped and fell against the gunwale, his sou'-wester falling overboard. The other men stopped work at once, and looked at him in a by no means friendly way. The skipper abused him loudly and fiercely.

"It was my own sou'-wester," Charlie

declared, unable to understand why the skipper should be so excited over the loss.

"Then why don't you jump overboard and save it? We will fish you up next time we haul."

The men laughed heartily at this grim joke.

"Take the skipper's advice, mate," one of them said. "I want some new boots badly."

"It is thought a bad omen if a fisherman's sou'wester is blown overboard," Ping Wang explained in a whisper, whereupon Charlie laughed loudly at the superstitious idea.

"Stop that row," the skipper shouted, "and start cleaning the fish."

Charlie took out his clasp-knife, and seized a plaice.

"Don't cut that," Ping Wang warned him. "Put the plaice in the box just as they are."

Charlie hesitated, for the fish was not yet dead, and he did not like the idea of packing it away while it was alive.

"Here, stow it away," a fisherman

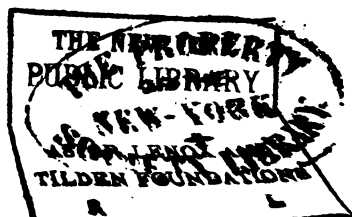
growled, and, snatching it out of his hand, flopped it in the box and smacked a dead fish on top of it.

The plaice were the only ones which had not to be cut open. As each fish was cleaned it was tossed into another pound, and when the whole of the catch, with the exception of the plaice, oysters, whelks, and the useless fish, were in this, the hose was turned on to the silvery mass.

When the fish had been thoroughly cleansed with water, they were packed away in boxes, which were at once stowed away in the hold between layers of ice.

Charlie was not required to assist in the work in the hold, and therefore he hurried to the bucket, on which was painted "All hands," and indulged in a wash. He was fortunate in being first, for fresh water is not plentiful on a trawler, and one bucketful has to suffice for the whole crew.

From the bucket, Charlie went to the galley and made the tea. Every one, from the



skipper to the ship's boy, had a mugful; some had two. The North Sea fishermen are inveterate tea-drinkers.

Having drunk their tea, the men threw off their oilies and turned in again with all their clothes on.

"It isn't worth while undressing," Ping Wang said to Charlie. "In about three hours' time we shall have to turn out again. If you don't undress you will have a little longer time to sleep."

Charlie did not undress, and consequently he was ready to start work at once when the time came. He put on a peaked cap in place of his lost sou'wester.

"Don't forget the tea, cook," one of them said to Charlie as he climbed up on deck. "Let's have it before we start hauling."

Thanks to the trimmer the kettle was boiling, and Charlie was therefore able to bring the men mugs of hot tea in less than five minutes from turning out.

"Cook is one of the right sort, after all,"



**"ONE OF THE FISHERMEN PREVENTED HIM FROM
SNEEZING AGAIN."**

**THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY**

**ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS**

R

L

one of the fishermen declared as he returned his empty mug to Charlie, and the others assented by nods and grunts. But before long Charlie was again in hot water. As he was assisting to haul in the net he sneezed loudly. In a moment one of the fishermen placed his big, dirty hand over his mouth and effectually prevented him from sneezing on the net again.

The skipper, looking down from the bridge, broke into loud abuse.

"What harm is there in sneezing?" Charlie answered, angrily.

"None of your back answers, or I'll clap you in irons."

"If you do, you'll have to pay for it dearly when we get back to Grimsby. I insist upon knowing what harm I have done."

"It is thought very unlucky to sneeze on a trawl," the mate explained, quietly, anxious to save Charlie from any further bullying. "It is supposed to bring bad luck to the trawler. Now, grab hold of the net."

Charlie again tugged at the net, and when the catch was emptied into the pound, it was found that it was an exceedingly small one.

“That comes of having you aboard!” the skipper declared, pointing at Charlie.

“I don’t see how my sneezing could have affected this catch,” Charlie answered, “considering that it was almost on board when I sneezed.”

“But how about your sou’wester last night? That was what ruined this catch, and your sneezing will spoil the next one.”

Charlie laughed openly at this prediction, but it was rather unfortunate for him that, when the next haul was made, it was found that the catch was still smaller than the previous one.

“I told you so!” the skipper declared, white with rage.

“It is a coincidence,” Charlie replied, calmly. “If I sneeze on the net now you will probably have a fine catch next time.”

“No back answers. Don’t you try to teach me anything. Get away to the galley at once, and be careful what you do.”

Charlie returned to the galley, hardly knowing whether to be angry or amused. It was very galling to have to submit to the abuse of an ignorant, blustering fellow like the skipper, but, at the same time, he could not take the man’s superstition seriously.

“I would not have believed, unless I had seen the skipper, that it was possible for there to be such a superstitious Briton living at the end of the nineteenth century,” Charlie said to the mate, about half an hour later.

“Oh, there are many like him in the North Sea,” the mate answered, “and all the arguing in the world won’t convince them of their foolishness. After a time you will not find his ignorance and superstition amusing. However, what I want to say to you is this: the men in the foc’s’le declare that the grub isn’t well cooked, and that you haven’t given

them plum duff yet. You must let them have it to-morrow."

"I will," Charlie declared, as if plum duff were the easiest thing in the world to make.

When the mate left him, Charlie took out the bow-legged cook's written instructions to see what ingredients were necessary. His idea was to make and boil the pudding that evening, so that, if it turned out a failure, he would have time to make another one. If it proved to be a success, he would be able to warm it up on the following morning. But, just as he began to read the recipe, he noticed that the fire had burnt low and needed instant attention. In his anxiety to prevent it from going out, he put down the flimsy little book and began shovelling coals on the fire. While he was doing that a gust of wind swept through the galley, and carried the recipe-book out through the port-hole and into the sea.

Charlie, gazing out at it, saw it float for a moment or two, and then lost sight of it.

“ Well,” he muttered ruefully, “ I don’t know how I am going to make plum duff now! ”

CHAPTER V.

“ I SHALL not be able to make plum duff,” said Charlie to Ping Wang, about half an hour after his loss of the cook’s recipe-book.

“ There will be a row if the men discover that you don’t know how to make it,” Ping Wang declared, looking serious. “ But never mind that, I have something more important to tell you. Come aft; the skipper may be listening to what we are saying.”

They went right to the stern of the trawler and stood against the gunwale.

“ No one can come near us without our seeing him,” Ping Wang said, and continued at once: “ Could you swim a mile in a sea like this? ”

“ I think so.”

“ Then let us desert the *Sparrow-hawk* when darkness comes on.”

“ But where are we to swim to? I don’t see any boats within five miles of us.”

Ping Wang pointed to the horizon, where the smoke of about half a dozen trawlers was plainly visible.

“ That’s a fleet of steam trawlers,” he declared, “ and before midnight we shall be among them. When one comes within a mile or so of us, we will jump overboard and swim to her. The skippers and men on the steam trawlers belonging to the large fleets are splendid fellows, and when they hear what a beast Skipper Drummond is, they won’t send us back. We must start as soon as possible after the midnight shoot, if there is any trawler near us then.”

“ Suppose the skipper thinks we have fallen overboard, and sends a boat to rescue us? ”

“ I don’t think that he would take the trouble. But listen! I can hear him on the

bridge. Don't let him see us talking, in case he suspects that we are up to something."

Ping Wang made his way for'ard, while Charlie returned to the galley and busied himself in making buns. He had made some on the previous evening, and although he did not enjoy the one that he tasted, the crew found no fault with them.

As he worked, he could see through the port-hole that the fishing fleet was drawing nearer. Some of the trawlers were miles away on the starboard bow, and others on the port.

Three hours later, when it was dark, Charlie counted twenty-five trawlers, and every now and again he could see the mark-ship's rockets piercing the night gloom. At ten o'clock he calculated that the nearest trawler was quite three miles away, and, judging from the course the steamers were taking, he began to fear that it would come no nearer. But shortly before the men turned out to haul, Ping Wang popped his head into the

galley and beckoned Charlie to come outside.

"As soon as we have hauled and shot," he said in a whisper, "we must slip off aft and dive overboard."

"We shall have to swim nearly two miles."

"Oh, no; nothing like that distance," Ping Wang declared, and pointed to a smack on the starboard side which Charlie had not noticed.

"It's a mission ship," Ping Wang explained, "and she will lay to until daybreak. By the time that we have hauled and shot we shall be abreast of her, and won't have more than half a mile to swim. The skipper is fast asleep, and, as the mate is not going to disturb him, we shall have a quiet haul."

A few minutes later, Charlie and Ping Wang were tugging at the cold, dripping net, delighted at the thought that it was the last time they would have to perform such work.

the ship, and when they had been swimming for a good time, Ping Wang's courage began to fail him.

"I shall never reach her," he declared.

"I'm getting tired. It is all up with me."

"Nonsense, man," Charlie answered, swimming a little closer to him. "Have a rest; float."

Ping Wang acted on Charlie's advice.

"She was much farther from the *Sparrow-hawk* than we thought," Ping Wang declared, when he had rested for a few moments.

"You're right," Charlie answered; "but we shall reach her in ten minutes at the latest."

Ping Wang, encouraged by what Charlie had said, turned over and resumed swimming.

For more than ten minutes they swam steadily onward without saying a word, but still the sailing-boat was a long way from them, and Charlie vowed to himself that

never again would he attempt to judge distances at sea.

A few minutes later Ping Wang again turned on to his back. He did not utter a word, but Charlie knew by his heavy breathing that he was nearly exhausted. When he had lain there for some minutes he said, with a gasp, "I will have one more try," and started off again. But when he had swum a few yards he said, feebly, "I can't reach her. Don't you bother about me. Look after yourself."

"I won't go aboard her without you," Charlie declared, and kept a closer watch on his companion. Soon he saw that Ping Wang, if left to himself, would be drowned.

"Turn on your back and lie still," he said, "and I'll tow you."

Very fortunately Charlie had often practised the art of saving life from drowning, and therefore had no difficulty in supporting Ping Wang, who had the presence of mind to lie still. In a few minutes the China-

man recovered somewhat, and Charlie, seeing the improvement, said: "If you can support yourself for a few moments I'll hail the ship."

"All right," Ping Wang replied, and Charlie, letting him go, turned over and shouted toward the sailing ship, "What ho, there!"

For two or three minutes he waited for an answering shout, but none came.

"What ho! What ho!" he sang out, and almost immediately he saw some lights moving about on the deck of the ship.

"Help, help!" he shouted with all his strength.

"Coming," was the faint reply that reached him, and almost at the same moment he noticed that a boat was being lowered.

"We shall be picked up in a few minutes," he said to Ping Wang, and the good news had such a reviving effect upon the Chinaman that he turned over and began to swim again.

“ Lie still,” Charlie shouted, knowing that his companion’s strength would otherwise soon expire.

Ping Wang obeyed instantly.

“ Where are you? ” the men in the boat called out.

“ Here,” Charlie answered, and so that the boat might not have much difficulty in finding them, he hailed her every few moments.

Sometimes he caught sight of her on the top of a wave, and then he would see nothing more of her for quite a minute. But at last she reached them.

“ Take my friend first,” Charlie sang out to the man who was holding aloft a big lantern to get a look at them.

In a moment the boat was brought alongside Ping Wang, who was fished out in a state of collapse. Charlie, almost unaided, scrambled in, and at once busied himself in striving to revive his companion. Fortu-

nately he was successful, and by the time the boat reached the ship, Ping Wang was not much the worse for his long and unpleasant swim.



"CHARLEY SCRAMBLED OVER THE GUNWALE."

**THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY**

**ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS**

R

L

CHAPTER VI.

THE three men who had rescued Charlie and Ping Wang were not talkative, and beyond saying, "That's all right," when they were thanked for their assistance, scarcely said a word. The skipper of the sailing ship was, however, very different.

"Get down below, boys, and put on some dry togs," he exclaimed, genially, as Charlie and Ping Wang scrambled over the gunwale. "There are chests full of them."

The fugitives obeyed him willingly, but as Charlie put on the dry things provided for him, he took stock of the saloon, and was astonished at what he saw. Pictures of prize-fighters and race-horses hung on the walls, and at the far end of the saloon there was a sort of bar, behind which he noted some black bottles.

"Surely this can't be a mission ship," Charlie said, in an undertone, to Ping Wang.

"It isn't what I expected to find on one," Ping Wang answered. "However, we shall soon know, for here comes the skipper."

"Well, how are you feeling now?" the skipper inquired, boisterously.

"Better," Charlie answered, wondering what his nationality was, for, although he spoke English fluently, he was evidently a foreigner.

"That's good," the skipper replied, "but why didn't you tip me the wink that you were coming over to us? I would have had the boat hanging around for you. Do any of the other fellows want to come aboard?"

"No, they have all turned in by now."

"What a crew they must be. Who is your skipper?"

"Drummond, of the *Sparrow-hawk*."

"I know him. He passed a bad five-shilling piece on me the last time he was aboard this craft."

"Will he come aboard to-morrow, do you think?" Ping Wang asked, with difficulty concealing his anxiety.

"Not likely. I told him that if ever he set foot on the *Lily*, I would go for him. However, we don't want to talk about him. What are you going to drink?"

"Tea or coffee, I don't mind which."

The skipper threw back his head and laughed heartily, as if Charlie had said something that was witty. "Do you really mean it?" he asked at length.

"I do."

"Well!" the skipper gasped, and was evidently overcome with surprise.

After a few minutes' silence his spirits revived.

"I'll send you some tea down before long," he said, and then went on deck without another word.

"Do you know what this ship is?" Charlie asked as soon as he was gone.

“ If this is not a pleasure-boat, I do not know what it is,” Ping Wang answered.

“ It’s a coper.”

“ A coper! What is that? ”

“ I thought every one in the North Sea knew.”

“ This is only my second voyage, and your countrymen do not talk to me as freely as if I were an Englishman. What is a coper? ”

“ It is a boat that sails about the North Sea to sell drink and tobacco to our fishermen. She flies a flag to show that she has tobacco for sale, and when the men come aboard her, they are tempted to drink, just as we were a few minutes ago. As a rule, the poor fellows do drink, and if their money is not all spent by the time that they are intoxicated, they are cheated at cards or robbed. I am very much afraid that we have not bettered ourselves by leaving the *Sparrow-hawk*, for if the skipper of the coper finds that we have money, even though we

neither drink nor gamble, he will be anxious to get rid of us."

A few minutes later a boy brought down to them two mugs of what was supposed to be tea.

"What awful stuff!" Charlie exclaimed after tasting it. "One sip is quite enough for me."

"There must be something besides sugar and milk in it," Ping Wang declared.

"That is very likely. The skipper hopes that it will get in our heads without our knowing that we have been drinking intoxicants. We will upset the rascal's plans by not drinking any more of the tea."

In about a quarter of an hour the skipper returned.

"Well, boys, how are you getting on?" he exclaimed. "Have some more tea?"

"No, thank you," Charlie replied. "We haven't drunk this. There's something about the taste that we don't like."

"It's first-class tea. I've never had any

complaints about it until now. I'm very sorry that you don't like it, for you need something warming after your long swim. But look here, if you are teetotalers, what did you come aboard the *Lily* for? "

" We made a mistake. We mistook her for another boat."

The skipper looked at Charlie searchingly. " Did you think she was a revenue cutter? " he asked.

" Oh, no; we mistook her for a mission ship."

Now, coper skippers have the same hatred for mission ships that they have for revenue cutters, for the former, by selling tobacco at low prices, keep the North Sea fishermen away from the copers, and so have spoiled their traffic in intoxicant drinks.

" You thought she was a mission ship, did you? " the skipper growled. " Well, you made a fine mistake."

" We know that now," Charlie replied.

" Then why are you sticking here? Jump

overboard, and swim back to the *Sparrow-hawk*."

"I should be drowned," Ping Wang declared.

"Well, that wouldn't be much of a loss. There are too many Chinamen already."

"Look here, skipper," Charlie interrupted, anxious to prevent a quarrel, "I have a proposal to make. My friend and I left the *Sparrow-hawk* because the skipper was a wretched little bully. I suggest that we stay here, as passengers, until we meet a boat for Grimsby that will take us aboard."

"You will have to pay me before you leave the *Lily*."

"I'll do so, willingly, unless your charges are unreasonable."

"Will you pay in advance?"

"Certainly not; but I'll settle up with you every evening."

"Then hand over sixpence for those two cups of tea."

"Sixpence!" Charlie answered. "Why,

you are charging as if you had put brandy in them. I'll give you threepence."

Charlie took his belt from his pocket, and, as he undid the pouch attached to it, in which he kept his money, the skipper caught sight of three or four sovereigns.

"Well," he said, as he pocketed the three pennies which Charlie gave him, "I ought to let Skipper Drummond know that you are aboard; but, as I owe him a grudge, I won't. I haven't any spare bunks for you, so you must sleep on the cushions here."

Charlie and Ping Wang were far from considering that a hardship, for the copper's saloon was a little palace compared with the *Sparrow-hawk's* foc's'le.

"Well," the skipper continued, "I'm going to shut up for the night."

He drew a sliding door over the bottles, and locked it, and left them. As soon as he had gone they lay down and, finding the saloon cushions fairly comfortable, were soon asleep. They awoke about seven o'clock, and,

going on deck immediately, found that during the night the *Sparrow-hawk* had steamed away. The coper, was, however, in the midst of a busy scene; for the steam trawlers belonging to the fleet which Charlie and Ping Wang had seen on the previous day had closed in, and were busy sending their boxes of fish aboard the steam carrier that was waiting to hurry off with them to Grimsby. The fish was conveyed from the trawlers to the carriers in small, but strongly built, rowing-boats, and some of these, after getting rid of their load, came to the *Lily*. As the men sprang over the gunwale on to the deck, the skipper greeted each with a hearty, "What cheer, sonny?"

Many of the fishermen were easily prevailed upon to go below and drink. Some indulged in one glass, and then hurried off to their ships; but two men remained in the saloon long after the others had departed. When they had been there for half an hour their skipper blew his siren loudly, as a com-

mand for them to return at once. Each came on deck quickly; but they were intoxicated to an extent that surprised Charlie, considering the short time they had been on the *Lily*.

"They will never get back to their ship," Charlie declared to the skipper of the coper.

"That is their lookout, not mine," the skipper answered, and turned away, evidently not caring what happened to them.

The *Lily*, in common with all the North Sea trawlers, had no ladder by which men quitting the ship could descend into the small boat. The departing man has to hang from the gunwale until the small boat is lifted high on a wave, and then he drops quickly into it. A moment's hesitation may result in his falling into the sea, sometimes with the risk of being crushed between the ship and the small boat. Charlie had good reason, therefore, for thinking that the two poor fellows might meet with an accident, but the men themselves did not consider that there was any danger.

“ We shall be all right,” one of them answered, noisily, when Charlie advised them to be careful, and the man who spoke certainly dropped into the small boat as easily as if he were sober. The other man, however, hung to the gunwale longer than he should have done, and, consequently, when he did release his hold he had a long way to drop. He landed with both feet on one of the seats, and, after struggling for a moment to balance himself, fell backwards into the sea, but, fortunately, not between the boat and the ship. His mate broke into a laugh, but made no attempt to rescue him. Possibly he thought that the man could swim, but it was clear to Charlie that he could not, and that unless he went to his assistance he would be drowned. So he pulled off his coat and dived into the sea. He came to the surface just beside the man, and, seizing him, pushed him along until they reached the boat, into which the now sober fisherman quickly scrambled. In the meanwhile the other man, seeing Char-

lie dive to the assistance of his shipmate, had come to the conclusion that he also ought to do something. He dived in, but in consequence of the muddled state of his head, swam in the wrong direction, and by the time that it dawned on him that he had made a mistake his mate had been rescued by Charlie.

Being a good swimmer, the man regained the boat easily, and Charlie was glad to see that the water had sobered him as effectually as it had his mate.

"You've had a very narrow escape," Charlie said to the man whom he had rescued. "Now take my advice, both of you, and don't you ever again set foot on a coper. If you want tobacco, go to a mission ship."

Charlie got on the seat as he finished speaking, and as the little boat was lifted on a big wave he sprang upwards, grasped the *Lily's* gunwale and climbed aboard, leaving the men to whom he had denounced copers to wonder why he was on one. Loud blasts

from their trawler's siren instantly drove all thoughts of Charlie's action from their minds, and rowing hard they worked their way back to their ship, where they received a lecture from the skipper which they did not forget that voyage.

CHAPTER VII.

THREE days passed, and Charlie and Ping Wang were still on board the coper, no boat bound for Grimsby having been met. During that time Charlie and his friend had seen many things which filled them with loathing for the boat on which circumstances had placed them.

On the third evening, when the coper's boat returned from a trip around the trawlers, Charlie and Ping Wang were surprised to see that the passengers were two men who had been sent away early on the previous evening, because their money was spent.

"How can they have got money since last night?" Charlie said to Ping Wang.

"They've borrowed from their mates," Ping Wang suggested, but they soon discovered that his explanation was not the

right one. As the boat bobbed up and down by the side of the *Lily*, the men took from the bottom of it a fishing-net, and handed it up to the skipper, who was leaning over the gunwale.

"They have stolen that net," Charlie remarked, guessing the truth, "and the skipper is going to buy it from them."

"It's a new one, skipper," one of the thieves exclaimed, as he jumped on board.

"All right," the receiver of stolen property answered. "Go down below and enjoy yourselves."

The two men descended at once into the saloon, while the skipper, after examining the net, dragged it aft, and, removing a hatchway, dropped the net into the hold. As he did so Charlie stepped forward, and, looking down, saw, by the light of the wire-guarded lamp, that the hold was half-full of nets, oars, buckets, ropes, cooking utensils, brass fittings, mops, oilies, and other things too numerous to mention.

“ All that is stolen property, I suppose? ”
Charlie said to the skipper.

“ Well, it wasn't stolen from you,” the skipper answered, “ so you have no cause to grumble.”

He closed the hatchway, and then turned to Charlie to abuse him more freely, but just as he began a seaman came up and told him that a mission ship had joined the fleet of trawlers.

Forgetting all about Charlie, the skipper hurried away to look at the new craft, and found that the news was true. Very bad news he considered it, for he knew that the North Sea fishermen never came aboard a coper if there was a mission ship with the fleet. Tobacco is sold cheaper on a mission ship than on a coper, and naturally the fishermen, who have very little money to spend, buy in the cheapest market. Moreover, every man aboard a mission ship is a friend of the fishermen, and there is not a trawler in the North Sea on which it is not

possible to find two or three men who have good reasons for blessing mission ships. Hundreds of men have been carried aboard these floating hospitals and nursed back to health.

When the mission ship was about half a mile from the *Lily*, Charlie said to the copper skipper: "Now is your chance to get rid of Ping Wang and me. Hail that boat and send us aboard her."

"Hail a craft like that?" the skipper answered, roughly. "I'd sink her with pleasure if I had the chance; but as for hailing her — I'd rather die!"

"I'll give you a sovereign to take us aboard her."

"Wouldn't do it for ten sovereigns."

Charlie went back to Ping Wang and told him of the skipper's decision.

"I'm not surprised," Ping Wang declared. "He will sail off as quickly as possible, I fancy."

That, indeed, was the copper skipper's in-

tention. He wished to start immediately, and would have done so had it not been for the two thieves who were drinking in the saloon.

“Now, then,” said the skipper, coming down to the saloon and addressing the thieves, “if you won’t leave, I shall have to sail off with you.”

“Right you are; I don’t care,” one of them declared, and the other added that he would thoroughly enjoy a cruise in a coper.

The skipper, however, had no intention of keeping on board two men without money, and was compelled to wait about for their departure. But just as he expected them to go, one man had a heated argument with his companion, which ended in a fight. The skipper, fearing that his saloon might be damaged, tried to stop the fight by seizing hold of the smaller man, who, however, promptly freed himself, and with two quick-following blows with his fist, knocked the skipper down. The other man had in the meanwhile jumped

across the counter and seized a bottle, which he put in his pocket.

“Come on, Jack,” he shouted to the man whom he had been fighting, and hurried up on deck. Jack, seeing that the skipper was not likely to interfere with him, followed his shipmate quickly on deck, and they made for the coper’s boat, but none of the ship’s crew were in it.

“Cut the painter, Jack,” the taller man commanded, and Jack, using his knife, soon did so. Then they grasped the oars and rowed away. It was the only boat that the coper possessed, and when the skipper discovered what the two fishermen had done, he hurried on deck and shouted abuse at them. The men took no notice, and soon arrived safely at their own ship. Before they climbed aboard, the taller man said, “Now let us sink the coper’s boat. Cut a hole in her.”

The other man was delighted with the idea, and without delay removed the bottom boards

and let in the water. That done, he followed his mate aboard the trawler, sending the small boat adrift.

The skipper of the coper had, in the meanwhile, by tacking, made an effort to keep his stolen boat in sight, but the night was dark, and the fear of a collision with a trawler made his endeavor a fruitless one, and he was compelled to lay to until daybreak would give him an opportunity of renewing his search. But, of course, when morning came he could see no signs of his boat, and after several hours' search he sailed away. About six hours later he sighted another fleet. He at once made for it, but finding on approaching nearer that there was a mission ship with it, he sailed off in another direction.

The skipper was now in a very bad temper, and his ill-humor spread to his men, who were mostly foreigners. It was evident to Charlie and Ping Wang, although they did not understand Dutch, that the latter were relieving

their feelings by making insulting remarks concerning them.

While the coper's men were speaking about Charlie and Ping Wang, the Chinaman, innocent of any intention to be rude, made some gesture which one of the crew took for an insult. Instantly he rushed at Ping Wang and struck him a heavy blow in the face with his fist. He was about to strike him again, but Charlie pushed him roughly aside and faced him with clenched fists.

The sailor struck viciously at Charlie, who warding off two blows and then landed his opponent a heavy one full in the mouth. This he followed up with a blow between the eyes, knocking the man down. For a moment the sailor lay still; then, seeing that he was likely to get the worst of the encounter, he quickly ran to the galley, and, seizing a big shovel, prepared to continue to fight with it. But the skipper, hearing a disturbance, hurried aft to see what was taking place. He met the man with the shovel, and, hearing

his threat, drew his revolver and pointed at him.

“Take it back!” he commanded, and the man obeyed reluctantly. “I don’t want murder done aboard my ship,” the skipper added, turning to Charlie and Ping Wang, “so don’t annoy my men.”

“We have done nothing whatever to annoy them,” Charlie declared, “and the assault upon Ping Wang was quite unprovoked.”

“There must have been some reason for the fellow hitting him,” the skipper declared, and at once questioned his men, who, of course, made known the nature of the insult which they had received from the Chinaman. He explained the matter to Charlie and Ping Wang, and afterward assured his men that no insult had been intended. The sailor who had assaulted Ping Wang then made an apology, and the whole incident was concluded by his shaking hands with Charlie. But in the middle of the night Charlie had an experience that was far more unpleasant

than his brief fight. He was sleeping, as usual, on the cushioned seat in the saloon when he woke suddenly, feeling some one tampering with the belt which he wore, and which contained the whole of his money.

"You scoundrel!" he shouted, as he gripped the thief's hand. The next moment Charlie uttered a cry of pain, for the thief, who was under the table, drew a knife across his hand. Charlie released his hold of the thief instantly, and then jumped up, in the hope of catching the man before he could escape. But the thief was too quick for him. The room was in darkness, and, before Charlie could make his way out of his cramped quarters at the side of the table, the thief had climbed up the ladder and closed the iron door behind him.

Ping Wang was now awake, and, finding the place in semi-darkness, struck a light.

"Turn up the lamp," Charlie said, and when the Chinaman had done as he desired, he told him what had happened.

“How much has he taken?” Ping Wang inquired.

“Half a sovereign,” Charlie replied, after counting his money. “Evidently the scoundrel had only tried one of the little pockets when I woke. It is a good thing that I distributed my money all round my belt.”

“It is, indeed,” Ping Wang answered. “Now let me bind up your hand.”

The cut was not very severe, the thief apparently having had no desire to inflict a deep wound.

“Let us go and complain to the skipper at once,” Ping Wang suggested, and, after putting on a few clothes, they went on deck, where, somewhat to their surprise, they found the skipper at the wheel.

“Hello!” he sung out. “What’s up? Going to try another midnight swim?”

In as few words as possible Charlie told him what had happened.

“You’ve been dreaming,” the skipper declared, with a laugh. “I’ve been at the

wheel for the last three-quarters of an hour, and you are the first person I have seen come out of the saloon. No one could come out without me seeing him. Get down below again, and don't lie on your back; you are sure to dream if you do."

"Dreams do not cut a man's fingers," Charlie observed, sharply.

"Well, I'll make inquiries, but it is not likely that the man who did rob you — if you were robbed — will confess. Now get below or you'll catch cold."

Charlie and Ping Wang returned to the saloon, very dissatisfied with this conversation.

"I believe," Ping Wang said, "that it was the skipper himself who robbed you."

"So do I," Charlie replied; "but how can I prove it? And if I could prove it, what good would it be while we are on his ship? All we can do is to take extra precautions against being robbed."

After talking for about half an hour, they fell asleep, and were not again disturbed.

When they went on deck, shortly after breakfast, the skipper summoned all hands on deck, and questioned each man as to whether he had been into the saloon during the night. Each one denied having done so, and Charlie believed them.

"It is my opinion," the skipper said to Charlie an hour or two later, "that it was that Chinaman who robbed you."

"If you knew Ping Wang as well as I do, such a foolish idea would never have entered your head."

"All Chinamen are very crafty. You had better let me make him sleep in the foc's'le."

"So that it would be easier for me to be robbed."

"What do you mean? Do you accuse me of robbing you?"

"I do not accuse any one unless I can prove my charges. At any rate, I shouldn't

be doing you an injustice if I did call you a thief, knowing, as I do, what a collection of stolen property you have in the hold. A receiver of stolen goods is not an atom better than a thief."

With this parting shot Charlie walked away.

CHAPTER VIII.

From the coper skipper's point of view the two following days were very unsatisfactory. Not an ounce of tobacco nor a drop of drink was sold, in spite of the fact that several fishing-boats were met. Growing reckless, the skipper determined to approach the English coast, so as to meet the boats coming out of the Humber.

"Now you will soon be able to transfer us to a Grimsby-bound boat," Charlie said to the skipper, when they were about two miles from land.

"I have come here to look after outward-bound boats," the skipper answered, sharply, "and I can't bother about you. I have quite enough to think about."

A few minutes later, Charlie understood what the skipper meant. He was in British

waters, and to sell tobacco or drink there would render him liable to be seized by a cruiser or revenue cutter. Every sailing ship that came out of the Humber the captain watched closely through his marine glasses, and not until he had satisfied himself that she was harmless did he approach her.

The skipper was well pleased with his work at the end of the day, and when darkness came on he sailed out of British waters, with the intention of returning at daybreak. Charlie and Ping Wang, however, considered that the day had been a most unsatisfactory one.

"I can't stand another day of this," Charlie said to Ping Wang, when the two were alone. "I mean to get ashore to-morrow somehow or other. Shall we jump overboard, and swim to the nearest ship making for the Humber?"

"I have lost confidence in my swimming powers," Ping Wang answered.

"But there will be no necessity for us to

have such a long swim as our last one. Besides, there will be plenty of boats about, and some of them are sure to come to our help."

"When do you mean to start?"

"As soon as we are again in British waters. That will be to-morrow morning. To-morrow night we shall be in Grimsby, or perhaps at my home. You agree, don't you?"

"Oh, yes. But now let us get to sleep. We ought to start as fresh as possible."

They lay down almost immediately, and slept soundly until about six o'clock. Then they were awakened rather suddenly by hearing a gun fired.

"What's the meaning of that?" Charlie asked, as he sat up and listened.

Ping Wang shook his head, and in a few minutes was again asleep. Charlie, a little later, lay down and slept; but in about a quarter of an hour they were again awakened, this time by men descending into the



““COME OVER HERE AND SURRENDER.””

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATION

R

L

saloon. Looking up over the saloon table, they saw two bluejackets, with cutlasses in their hands, at the foot of the ladder. An officer ran down the ladder and joined them.

As soon as Charlie and Ping Wang saw the sailors they guessed that the coper had been captured in British waters, and in their delight they jumped off the seat on which they had been sleeping and stood up on the cushions. In a moment the officer covered Charlie with his revolver.

"All right," Charlie exclaimed, "we are not Dutchmen."

"I didn't suspect your mate of being one," the officer replied, smiling, but still covering Charlie. "Come over here and surrender."

"With pleasure," Charlie said. "We are jolly glad you have boarded this wretched coper."

"The skipper denies that she is a coper. Possibly you can save us the trouble of hunting for his liquor and tobacco?"

"That is where it is kept," Charlie de-

clared, pointing to the cupboard. "The skipper has the key."

"Throw down the skipper's keys," Lieutenant Williams sang out to his men on deck.

For two or three minutes the revenue officer sat on the saloon table, dangling his legs and whistling cheerfully.

"The skipper says he hasn't any keys, sir," a sailor called down. "We have searched him, and can't find any, sir."

"Very well, then," the officer said; "we must do without them. Force open that cupboard."

One of the two sailors pulled out his knife and forced the lock with little difficulty; then he slid back the shutter and displayed the coper's stock of spirits, wines, tobacco, and cigars.

"A very nice collection indeed," the revenue officer declared. "I am very much obliged to you for your assistance," he continued, addressing Charlie; "but I must ask you to explain why you are on board this

boat. You are my prisoner, although you do not appear to be in league with the skipper."

Charlie related all that had happened to him. The story of his and Ping Wang's adventures amused the revenue officer highly.

"Well," he said, at the end of the story, "I'm very glad to have met both of you. After I have had a peep in the hold, I will take you aboard my cutter."

The hold, with its stock of nets and other stolen property, added to the revenue officer's satisfaction at the capture he had made. Leaving five men on the coper, to man it — three on deck and two in the saloon — he returned to his cutter, taking Charlie and Ping Wang with him. As soon as they were aboard, the cutter started, escorting the coper into Grimsby.

"How did you manage to catch the coper?" Charlie asked the lieutenant as they were watching the land coming nearer and nearer.

“ I discovered her yesterday, but could not get close to her while she was in British waters. I saw that the chances of catching her were against me, so did not make the attempt. At night I went out to sea with covered lights, and kept my eye on her. Just before daybreak she went back into British waters, and I followed her. When there was light enough for her to see me, she fancied, as I intended she should, that I was a fishing-boat, returning to Grimsby. While she had two trawlers' boats alongside I made for her. Then she guessed who I was, and tried to escape, but when I sent a shot across her bows she lay to, and the skipper demanded to know what I meant. I soon told him.”

“ I fancy,” Charlie said, “ that the copper skipper is an old hand at the game.”

“ I am certain of it,” the revenue officer replied, “ and that makes me all the more pleased. Now, I must be off.”

With that he went on deck, and Charlie and Ping Wang followed him. They were

now in the Humber, creating some excitement among the vessels in the river. All hands mustered on every ship to see the copper, and frequently, when the nature of the boat was known, loud cheers were given for the captor.

The news of the capture had reached Grimsby before the two boats arrived, and, consequently, there was a large crowd waiting to see the prisoners brought in. Among the people was the former cook of the *Sparrow-hawk*, whose excitement at beholding Charlie and Ping Wang on a revenue cutter highly amused his two acquaintances. Charlie nodded to him, but there was no opportunity to settle up with him just then, as the prisoners were immediately marched off to the magistrate.

To the revenue officer's surprise, the copper skipper pleaded guilty to selling spirits and tobacco in British waters. He did so because, seeing Charlie and Ping Wang in court, he knew that they would give evidence

against him. On his pleading guilty, the stock in trade, together with the stolen property which he had purchased, was confiscated. As Charlie and Ping Wang came out of the court they found the bow-legged cook waiting for them, anxious to get the balance of money due to him from Charlie, and also to hear how he had fared on the *Sparrow-hawk*. They went to the Fisherman's Home, and there the cook was paid.

Charlie then related, in as few words as possible, all that had happened to him from the time he went aboard the *Sparrow-hawk*, and concluded by asking the bow-legged cook not to mention to Skipper Drummond, if he met him during the next few days, that he had seen him and Ping Wang.

Charlie and Ping Wang shook hands with the cook and left him.

"Now," Charlie said, "we must go to a cheap tailor's. I think that I have enough money to buy a ready-made suit for each of us."

“ Perhaps the tailor will give us something for the coper’s things,” Ping Wang remarked. “ You paid enough for them.”

“ I did, and if I tell a tailor, or any one else, what I gave for them, I shall be thought a madman.”

Half a crown was the value which the Grimsby tailor placed upon the clothes which Charlie and Ping Wang were wearing. The new clothes which they purchased were rather loud in pattern, and by no means a good fit, but they were cheap, and a great improvement on the things which they had taken off.

After surveying themselves in the glass — and immediately wishing that they had not done so — they quitted the shop and made their way to the railway station, to start for Charlie’s home.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN Charlie arrived at his home, in an unmistakably ill-fitting suit of clothes and accompanied by a Chinaman, equally badly dressed, he caused great surprise to his family. If he had returned dressed in "fear-noughts" and a jersey, or even in "oilies," they would not have been surprised, but there was nothing nautical about his present attire.

"Well, my boy," Charlie's father said to him, after Ping Wang had been introduced, "have you had a good time?"

"Well, not exactly," Charlie answered, "but I have discovered that Skipper Drummond is an old rascal, and that he believes he will have no difficulty in swindling you."

"He is not the first person who has thought that and has lived to find that he has

made a mistake. However, you can tell me all about it after dinner. You had better run up-stairs and change your clothes."

After dinner, Charlie related all that had happened to him, from the time he met the bow-legged cook until he came back to Grimsby.

"I suspected that you would have a rough time," Mr. Page said, when Charlie had finished his story, "but I never thought that you would meet with so many unpleasant adventures. However, as you have discovered that Skipper Drummond is a dishonorable man, I am not sorry that you went to sea. I don't suppose you will be in a hurry to go again."

"I want to go very soon," Charlie replied. "I want to go to China with Ping Wang."

"To settle there?"

"Oh, no; simply to recover Ping Wang's family riches."

Mr. Page and Fred, not knowing whether

Charlie was serious or not, made no remark.

“ I’m quite sane,” Charlie declared, seeing that they were surprised; “ Ping Wang will tell you about it.”

Ping Wang, thus called upon, repeated the story of his father’s death and the seizure of all his property by Chin Choo.

“ But how do you know that Chin Choo still possesses the idol with the secret drawer? ” Mr. Page inquired, when Ping Wang finished speaking. “ He may have sold it.”

“ That is not at all likely,” Ping Wang declared. “ I know that he has had it fixed up in his chief room, and there it will remain as long as the house stands, or until Chin Choo moves somewhere else.”

“ And you think that Chin Choo cannot discover that the idol contains precious stones? ”

“ I am certain of it. My father was a richer man than Chin Choo imagined, and

the wealth that the murderer found in our house was more than he had expected. He is quite certain that he has found all my father's wealth. If he were not, he would never think of looking for it in the image."

"But do you think it possible to get into Chin Choo's house and remove the idol without being discovered?"

"I am certain of it; of course, I shall watch for a favorable opportunity."

"Well," Mr. Page said, after a few moments' thought, "I must think over the matter for a few days before deciding whether I can permit Charlie to accompany you."

"I wish I could go with them," Fred joined in. "I don't desire a share of the treasure. I simply want to go for the experience."

"But how about your studies?" Mr. Page asked.

"I wouldn't neglect them. I would read hard on board, and as my next examination

does not come on for nearly two years, I shall have plenty of time. And when I'm in China I shall be able to study tropical diseases. Medical men are very keen on that nowadays."

"Well, if Charlie goes, I see no reason why you should not; but it requires serious consideration."

"I will share my portion of the treasure with you," Charlie said to his brother, but Ping Wang objected to that arrangement.

"We will each have a third of what the rubies realize," he declared, and, in spite of all protests, he insisted that the division of the treasure, if they ever got it, should be made in that way.

Mr. Page listened in silence to their conversation. He was by no means convinced that Ping Wang's story was not an Oriental fiction, invented to arouse sympathy and obtain a free passage home. Now, as it happened, Mr. Page had a friend who was the senior partner of a large firm of Chinese

merchants, and had himself resided in China for many years, and he decided, therefore, to question him as to the probability of Ping Wang's story. A day or two later Mr. Page went to London and had an interview with this friend, who confirmed many details of Ping Wang's story, and even came down to Lincolnshire to see the Chinaman in person.

Ping Wang was delighted when he found that the merchant had lived in his country for many years, and could speak his language fluently.

"Ping Wang's story is, I am convinced, quite true," the merchant said to Mr. Page, when they were alone, "but his plan is a very risky one."

"I know, but that has only made them more anxious to go. It is another case of 'like father like son.' If I had not travelled while young, I am sure I should never have settled down. And the fact that in every place I visited I found scores of Englishmen yearning to return home, made me feel that I

was a fortunate man to see our distant possessions without being doomed to pass my life in exile. I have sufficient money to keep a home for my children, but I want my sons to be able to earn a living, and hold their own by themselves; and I think that, as I have the means to permit them to travel before settling down, they will do well to learn as much as they can of the world outside England. They shall go with Ping Wang. If they help Ping Wang to secure his inheritance, I shall, of course, be pleased, but I shall be glad for both the lads to gain experience, and I hope they will return in good health."

A little later Mr. Page told Charlie and Fred that he had decided to let them go to China, an announcement which was received with great delight. The next day he went to the shipping agent's, and, finding that a boat would start from Liverpool to Hongkong in twelve days' time, booked saloon passages for Fred, Charlie, and Ping Wang.

"To-morrow," Mr. Page said to his sons

and Ping Wang after he had returned from the shipping agent's, "you must see about your outfit. The time is very short."

"I think, sir," Ping Wang said, "that the clothes I have will be good enough."

"Would you not like to go in your native dress?"

Ping Wang's eyes brightened.

"Yes," he answered, "but you have paid my passage."

"Don't let that thought trouble you. When you have got back your jewels, you will be able to offer to repay me."

"You are very generous, sir," Ping Wang declared.

"Nonsense," Mr. Page answered. "You have been a good friend to my boy, and have had a rough time since you have been in England. If you carry away a better impression of our country than you would otherwise have done, I shall consider myself repaid for what I have been able to do for you."

CHAPTER X.

THE result of Mr. Page's generosity was that when Fred and Charlie went to a tailor's, Ping Wang ordered a Chinese costume. A week later it was sent home, and when Ping Wang put it on, and permitted his pigtail to hang down, he looked quite a different man. That day the family were sitting talking over the coming voyage, when a maid came in.

"A man wants to see you, sir," she said to Mr. Page. "He says his name is Skipper Drummond."

"What a lark!" Charlie exclaimed to Ping Wang. "Shall we carry him down the garden, and pitch him in the duck-pond?"

"Show Skipper Drummond in," Mr. Page said to the maid, and as she departed he continued: "Now, you boys and Ping Wang

go into the conservatory, and wait there until I call you."

Fred, Charlie, and Ping Wang stepped into the conservatory, and seated themselves on a rustic bench, so that they could hear what the skipper said without being seen by them.

"Skipper Drummond, sir," the maid said, as she reopened the door.

The bullying little skipper had evidently made a strong effort to look respectable. He was attired in a shiny black frock coat, and had it not been for his brightly colored tie, one would have imagined that he was going to a funeral. In one hand he held a tall hat; in the other he carried two stiff-looking black gloves.

"Good evening, sir," he said, as he stepped gingerly across the room, showing as much respect for the carpet as if it was newly sown grass.

"Take a seat," Mr. Page said, and he did so.

"I've come about the *Sparrow-hawk*, sir,"

he said, endeavoring to appear more comfortable than he felt.

“ Yes.”

“ We’ve had a grand time, sir. Every voyage the *Sparrow-hawk* makes she improves. There is not a trawler in the North Sea catches more fish than the *Sparrow-hawk*. She’s a beauty, sir; and every one in Grimsby and Hull knows it. Two of the big fleet owners want to buy her.”

“ I suppose that they did not offer so much for her as you are asking from me? ”

“ They offered more, sir.”

“ Then why did you not accept one of the offers? ”

“ Because it wouldn’t have been acting square with you, sir. I am a straightforward man, I am; and having offered the *Sparrow-hawk* to you at a certain price, I bide by my word.”

“ That is very good of you — very good, indeed. It is not often that I meet with such an honorable business man.”

Skipper Drummond sighed deeply, as if he was sincerely sorry for the fact that there were some men who were very dishonorable.

“ My idea was,” Mr. Page said, after a few moments’ silence, “ to purchase the *Sparrow-hawk* for my son, and start him in business as a steam trawler owner. Perhaps it would be well if I introduced you to him at once.”

“ I shall be proud to make the young gentleman’s acquaintance. I am not a man to boast, sir, but if any one can produce a man that knows more about North Sea fishing than I do, I’m a Dutchman.”

“ Charlie! ” Mr. Page called out loudly, and in walked from the conservatory Charlie, Ping Wang, and Fred.

“ Good evening, skipper! ” Charlie exclaimed, cheerfully.

“ Good evening, skipper! ” Ping Wang added, equally cheerfully.

Skipper Drummond dropped his hat and gloves, and almost started out of his chair.

Evidently he had never expected to see either Charlie or Ping Wang again.

“ Have you brought us the clothes which we left on the *Sparrow-hawk*? ” Charlie inquired.

“ And the pay which you owe me? ” Ping Wang added.

“ I thought that you were both drowned,” the skipper gasped.

“ And no doubt you are almost sorry that we were not,” Charlie remarked. “ However, we have told my father what a wretched old tub the *Sparrow-hawk* is. We have told him that she is rotten; that her boilers are worn out; that her gear is not up to date; that she has the smallest catches of any Grimsby trawler. We have told him also that you have been keeping down expenses by half-starving your men, and that you are the vilest little bully that ever held a captain’s certificate.”

“ And they also told me,” Mr. Page joined in, “ that you confessed to one of your men

that you were about to sell the *Sparrowhawk* for half as much again as she was worth. Let me assure you that you will do nothing of the kind. I would not give half the sum which you ask for her. From the first I suspected that you were a swindler, and it was to obtain proof of it that my son shipped with you as a cook. Have you anything that you wish to say in your defence, or will you go at once? ”

Skipper Drummond picked up his hat and gloves, and without uttering a word walked out of the room. He was white with rage, but he dared not express his anger in words such as he would have used on the *Sparrowhawk*, for Charlie accompanied him to the hall door, and stood in the porch watching him until he had passed into the main road.

“ We have seen the last of him, I think,” said Charlie, when the captain was out of sight, “ and I hope that I never meet another man like him.”

On the following evening the Pages had a

much more welcome visitor in Lieutenant Williams, who availed himself of Charlie's earnest invitation to come and see him and Ping Wang before they started for China. In private life he was just as cheery, amusing, and good-tempered as on board ship. He told many interesting stories of his work in coper-catching and arrests for illegal fishing. He quite envied Fred, Charlie, and Ping Wang their trip to China.

"Perhaps you will be sent to South Africa," Charlie remarked. "That would be much better than going with us."

"Certainly it would," Williams declared. "Active service is the best thing that a man in the navy can desire, but I am afraid that there is no chance of my getting to South Africa. At any rate, I shall go on hoping for foreign service of some sort."

"If he has an opportunity," Fred declared, after Lieutenant Williams had departed, "he will make the most of it, I am sure. He is just the kind of man to do some-

thing big, and then laugh and pretend that it was a very easy thing to do. I wish that he was coming with us. However, it's no good wishing. I'm going to have a good long sleep for my last night in the old home. Good night all."

Charlie and Ping Wang followed Fred's example and went to bed as quickly as possible. They awoke early, and later in the day reached Liverpool and went aboard the *Twilight*, which was to be their home for five or six weeks.

The *Twilight* was a cargo boat which had accommodation for twenty saloon passengers; but she rarely carried that number, as, her speed being but ten knots an hour, most people proceeding to China travelled by a faster and, consequently, more expensive steamer.

Soon after she had left Liverpool, Fred, Charlie, and Ping Wang began to wonder where the other passengers were.

"They can't possibly be seasick already,"

Charlie declared, and then seeing the chief steward, he inquired how many passengers they had aboard.

“ Only you three gentlemen,” the steward answered.

Fred and Charlie looked at each other in amazement. They had fully expected that there would be all sorts of amusements to break the monotony of their long voyage, and their disappointment was great. However, when they found that in consequence of their being the only passengers each might have a cabin to himself, their discontent quickly passed away. And when they got well out to sea they had plenty of amusements, for the captain had the shuffle-board, deck quoits, and other games brought out, and with the second officer and chief engineer played the passengers.

When the three passengers wearied of deck games, they sat on the poop reading some of the books which they had borrowed from the ship's library. Fred sometimes brought out

his medical books, but he obtained more practical than theoretical knowledge that voyage, for the ship's doctor — a young fellow who had been recently qualified and was taking a sea voyage, and small pay in return for his medical services — was completely prostrated by seasickness, and utterly useless as a doctor. Fred attended to him, doctored such of the crew as needed it, and successfully set a stoker's dislocated forefinger.

Fourteen days after leaving Liverpool the *Twilight* arrived at Port Said, and Fred, Charlie, and Ping Wang at once went ashore. The Pages thoroughly enjoyed their first glimpse of the East, for Ping Wang, knowing the place, took care that they should see everything worth seeing. After sitting for a time in a big café, which was crowded with men of almost every European nation, they wandered through the shop district, and out into the Arab portion of the town.

After they had looked at the sights for some little time, Ping Wang suggested that

they should have a donkey ride. They had noticed the large, handsome donkeys soon after they landed, but as the passengers from a big P. and O. vessel had come ashore just before they arrived, all the animals were engaged. But when they returned to the busy part of the town they found three donkeys on hire, and the donkey "boys," two of whom were elderly men, at once shouted out the names of their animals.

A Port Said donkey sometimes has its name changed three or four times in a year, in consequence of its proprietor's desire that it shall always bear one which is just then popular with Englishmen. You may ride on "W. G. Grace" in June, and on returning to Port Said in December will discover that the same animal is now called "Mr. Chamberlain," or "Lord Charles Beresford." The donkeys which Fred, Charlie, and Ping Wang found on hire were named, respectively, "Lord Roberts," "General Buller," and "Krüger."

Charlie sprang on to "Lord Roberts's" back; Fred made a rush for "General Buller," and left Ping Wang to mount "Krüger."

"Let us have a race," Charlie suggested, when they were getting clear of the crowded narrow streets, and immediately all three urged on their donkeys; but, before they had gone many yards, "Krüger" began to leave his companions behind.

"This will never do," Charlie declared, and touched up "Lord Roberts" with his stick. Fred tried to hurry up "General Buller." Neither of the animals, however, appeared to be at all anxious to exert themselves, and they would have lost the race had not the donkey man, remembering that his English patrons always seemed pleased when "Krüger" was last, caught hold of "Krüger's" tail with both hands, and, throwing back his head, pulled as if he were engaged in a tug of war. "Krüger," not liking this strain upon his tail, slackened

speed and stopped. "Lord Roberts" and "General Buller," evidently fearing that if they continued running they would be treated in the same way as "Krüger" had been, stopped with such suddenness that Fred was shot over his animal's head into the road, and Charlie only just escaped a similar fate by throwing his arms around his Jenny's neck.

"This is a nice thing!" Fred declared, ruefully, as he pointed to a big tear in his trousers. "To-day is the first time I have worn this suit."

Ping Wang condoled with him, but Charlie, who always maintained that his brother thought too much of dress, laughed at his mishap.

"If you had been wearing a serviceable suit like mine," he said, "your trousers would not have been torn."

"May the day never come," Fred answered, solemnly, "when I have to take your advice on the matter of dress. And now I

think it is about time that we returned to the *Twilight*."

"Shall we have another race?" Ping Wang asked, eagerly, somewhat disappointed at having been robbed of his victory.

"I've had quite enough racing, thank you," Fred declared, placing his hand over his knee to conceal the rent in his trousers.

"I haven't," Charlie joined in. "Come along, Ping Wang."

Charlie and Ping Wang whipped up their donkeys, but no sooner had they started than Fred's animal, in spite of its rider's efforts to restrain it, bolted after them, and, overtaking them, ran a dead heat with "Lord Roberts." "Krüger" was last.

When, after a little further exploration of the town, they went back to the *Twilight*, they were thoroughly delighted to find that she had finished coaling, and that nearly all traces of that unpleasant job had been removed.

They went down to dinner at once, and

when they came on deck again they were in the Suez Canal. Fred and Charlie found plenty to interest them in the canal. They saw several thin brown pariah dogs wandering about the desert in search of food, and once a dead camel came floating by them. Toward evening the *Twilight* had to anchor for a time, and the three passengers, with the captain's permission, went ashore and gathered flowers and shells to send home.

In the Red Sea there was still more to see. All day long the sea-gulls — brown with white breasts — hovered around the *Twilight*. Many other birds came and rested on the ship for hours, and, as the weather was intensely hot, Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang found it very entertaining to sit quietly in their long chairs and watch their pretty little feathered visitors.

CHAPTER XI.

THREE days after leaving Suez they saw, for the first time, the Southern Cross, and, on the following morning, they steamed into what, at first sight, Fred and Charlie thought was land, but was simply a wide streak of floating sand which had been blown out to sea during a sand-storm.

At night they were now permitted to sleep on deck—a boon which all three appreciated highly. They took their blankets and pillows on to the poop, and slept with greater comfort than they had experienced for many days, though one night they were caught in a heavy thunder-shower.

One morning, when they went on deck, they found it literally strewn with flying-fish. The ship's rats had evidently had a

good feed, for many of the fish were gnawed and bitten.

“ Would you like some flying-fish for breakfast, gentlemen? ” the cook said to the three passengers as they stood looking at the stranded fish.

“ Are they good? ” Charlie inquired, suspiciously.

“ First class,” the cook declared; so Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang had flying-fish for breakfast.

“ I can’t say that I consider them ‘ first class,’ ” Fred said, when he had eaten two of them, “ but I am glad that I shall be able to say that I have eaten one.”

“ Eaten two,” Charlie said, but Fred ignored the interruption.

“ I make a practice of tasting any new dish I come across,” he continued.

“ When we get to China,” Charlie said, “ Ping Wang will have the pleasure of offering you puppy-dog pie.”

Ping Wang smiled serenely.

“I don’t think that you will find Chinese food so bad as you imagine,” he said. “Certainly it will be better than what we had to eat on the *Sparrow-hawk*.”

While they were looking at a heap of dead fish, the captain shouted to them to come over to the starboard side; and on doing so they beheld a shoal of small fish being chased by big ones. To escape their pursuers the small fish jumped out of the water, and were instantly seized by the gulls, a flock of which were hovering around. The gulls had a splendid feast, several hundred of small fish being eaten by them before the *Twilight* steamed away from the shoal.

It was not long before the *Twilight* arrived at Aden, where they all went ashore for a short time.

After they left Aden, the days were extremely monotonous, for there was nothing to be seen but the ocean.

“I shall be jolly glad when the voyage

is at an end," Charlie declared when they had passed Ceylon without catching a glimpse of it.

"So shall I," Fred answered, "but it won't be much longer, and then the fun will begin."

"I hope," Ping Wang said, "that you will not mind being dressed as Chinamen."

"But, my dear fellow," Fred replied, "if we were dressed as Chinamen, we should not deceive any one. Our faces are not at all Chinese."

"I can alter that by shaving your eyebrows."

"Very likely, but Chinamen without pig-tails would be as absurd as a wingless bird."

"I will buy two pigtails," Ping Wang declared, calmly.

"What! Surely Chinamen don't wear false pigtails?" Charlie exclaimed.

"Thousands of them do, but, of course, they keep it as secret as do your English ladies who wear false hair."

“ But how do they fix it to their head? Stick it on to their bald pates with gum? ”

“ Oh, no! Chinamen are never quite bald — at least, I have never met any who are — and the pigtail is fixed to what hair they have. My reason for advising you not to have your hair cut in Port Said was that I wanted you to have long hair by the time we reached Hongkong. I think that it is already long enough for pigtails to be attached.”

Charlie was delighted at the prospect of having to don Chinese attire, but Fred was far from pleased. He had provided himself with an excellent khaki campaigning suit, and did not at all like the idea of its lying idle. However, after some further conversation, Ping Wang succeeded in convincing him that, for the success of their plans for recovering the idol, it was necessary that he and Charlie should pass themselves off as Chinese.

“ We shall have to eat our food with chopsticks, I suppose? ” Charlie remarked.

“ Certainly,” Ping Wang replied.

“ Then lend me yours, and I’ll start practising at once. I don’t want to be starved when I get to China.”

Ping Wang lent his chop-sticks willingly, and having obtained some boiled rice from the cook, Charlie practised getting it into his mouth. It was an easier task than he had imagined, and when he had become proficient, he passed the chop-sticks on to Fred, who at once set to work to become as accomplished as his brother. Long before they arrived at Hongkong, Fred and Charlie found it as easy to eat with chop-sticks as with a knife and fork.

It was early one morning when the *Twilight* arrived at Hongkong, and the Pages and Ping Wang at once went ashore in a *sampan*, or native boat, to present a letter of introduction which they had brought from England.

Although it was only half-past six when they arrived at the Hongkong merchant's office, they found the manager, to whom their letter was addressed, already hard at work. He had received, some days before, from the head of the firm in London, notification of the Pages being on their way to Hongkong, and greeted them very cordially.

"I had hoped," he said, after a few minutes' conversation, "that you would have been here a day or two ago, for there is a very decent boat starting for Tien-tsin this afternoon, on which you would have been very comfortable. The next one will not be leaving until to-day three weeks."

"Then let us start this afternoon," Charlie exclaimed.

"I am quite willing," Ping Wang said, "if we can get you and Fred disguised in time. As we are going to my native village, which is a very anti-foreign place," he continued, addressing the manager, "I think

that it will be wise to have my friends disguised as Chinamen."

"If they can act up to their disguise the suggestion is an excellent one," the manager declared, "for there are rumors that the Boxers or Big Sword Society are threatening to drive out all the foreigners in the land. If you wish to go on by this afternoon's boat there should be no difficulty about getting your friends disguised in time. I will send for my barber and tailor at once."

The manager sent for the barber and tailor, and also despatched a message to the skipper of the boat which was sailing that afternoon, the *Canton*. The Pages and Ping Wang had breakfast when these orders had been given, and long before they had finished their meal the barber arrived, the tailor following him very quickly. After breakfast the manager took his guests up to his bedroom, and called to the barber and the tailor to follow them. The latter had brought with him an excellent assortment of Chinese gar-

ments, and from them Ping Wang speedily selected suitable clothes for his English friends. He also chose, with the aid of the barber, a couple of splendid pigtails. Charlie having paid for the goods, the tailor departed, leaving the barber to begin shaving the Englishmen's heads and eyebrows.

Fred was the first to be operated on, and Charlie laughed heartily when he saw the alteration which the loss of eyebrows made in the appearance of his brother. The barber was a quick worker, and turning his attention to Fred's head, speedily removed with scissors and razor a large portion of his hair. He found, however, that although Fred's hair had been allowed to grow during the voyage, it was not sufficiently long for a pigtail to be tied securely to it. Therefore he sewed the pigtail to the inside of a skull-cap, and placed the cap on Fred's head.

"It is very well done," Ping Wang admitted, when Fred was fully dressed in Chinese garments. "If I had glanced at you

casually out-of-doors, I should not have suspected that you were not a Chinaman."

"But I don't like the idea of wearing this little cap," Fred protested; "I shall get sunstroke."

"When you go into the sun you can wear a beehive," Ping Wang replied, pointing to several big Chinese hats which the tailor had left for inspection.

Charlie's disguise was completed with even more speed than Fred's had been.

"It's splendid," Charlie declared, as he surveyed himself in the glass; "don't you think so, Fred?"

A few minutes later the barber was dismissed, and the four of them returned to the sitting-room, where the skipper of the *Canton* was awaiting them. He shook hands with the manager and greeted the other three men in Chinese. Charlie was nearest to them, and feeling that politeness demanded that he should say something, blurted out, "*Je ne parle pas Chinese.*"

The skipper looked puzzled, and the manager, who was already in a laughing humor, roared, but Ping Wang was very serious.

"I say, Charlie," he exclaimed, "do remember that you are not to answer any one who addresses you in Chinese, or we shall be discovered."

The skipper looked at Charlie in surprise. It was the first time that he had heard a Chinaman called Charlie.

"Two of these gentlemen are Englishmen," the manager explained. "What do you think of their disguise?"

"It is excellent. If I had not heard you speak," he added, addressing Ping Wang, "I should never have believed that you were an Englishman."

"I'm not one," Ping Wang declared, merrily; "I'm a Chinaman."

"Well, who am I to believe?" the skipper exclaimed in bewilderment.

"They are the Englishmen," the manager answered, pointing to Fred and Char-

lie; "the other gentleman is a Chinaman. But to come to the point, I want you to take my three friends to Tien-tsin. They wish to be undisturbed, and do not want it to be known that they are not Chinamen. Therefore, let every one — even the mate — fancy that they are Celestials."

"I understand. I will have the saloon berths got ready at once. What time will they come aboard? I shall sail about four."

"Will half-past three be early enough?"

"Half-past three, sharp, will do."

The skipper departed a few minutes later, leaving the three travellers alone with the manager.

"Let us sit in the veranda," the manager suggested, and for fully two hours they sat in long chairs chatting together, and watching the busy scene in the street below.

"Would it not be a good idea if we went for a short stroll?" Fred asked, after a time. "It would accustom us to appearing in public in our Chinese garb."

“That is a good suggestion,” Charlie declared. “Don’t you think so, Ping Wang?”

“You would be safer here,” said Ping Wang; “but if you wish to go out, I will come with pleasure. We must not go far. We needn’t wear our beehives. We will keep in the shade.”

“We mustn’t walk three abreast, I suppose?” Fred remarked, as they quitted the premises.

“No,” Ping Wang answered. “It will be better to walk single file. I’ll walk in the rear, so that I can keep watch on you, and hurry forward if any of my countrymen speak to you. Don’t walk fast.”

Charlie stepped into the street, Fred followed, and Ping Wang brought up the rear. At first Charlie and Fred felt decidedly uncomfortable, and fancied that every one who glanced at them had discovered that they were not Chinamen.

CHAPTER XII.

BEFORE the three adventurers had gone many yards, a Chinese beggar sidled up to Charlie and begged his honorable brother to bestow a gift upon the degraded dog who addressed him.

At first Charlie did not know whether the man was asking what the time was, or whether he desired to be directed to some place. So he gave a glance round, and discovering that the man was begging he shook his head gravely. The beggar departed, and Charlie inwardly congratulated himself on having done very well. His self-satisfaction was, however, short-lived. He looked round to assure himself that Fred and Ping Wang were following him, and just as he did so a European lady stepped out of a shop, and her parasol, which she was in the act of open-



**"CHARLEY FORGETTING HIS DISGUISE . . . RAISED HIS
SKULL-CAP."**

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R

L

ing, prodded him in the back. He turned sharply, and the lady, believing him to be a Chinaman, apologized in Chinese. Seeing that she was apologizing, Charlie quite forgot his disguise, and seizing his skull-cap, raised it. Of course the pigtail came off with it, to the amazement of the lady, who stepped quickly into her trap and drove off.

Fred had the greatest difficulty in preventing himself from laughing aloud, but Ping Wang hurried forward, and taking Charlie by the arm, said in an undertone, "Come into this shop: you have put your cap on crooked."

The Chinese shop assistant laughed heartily as he saw Ping Wang arrange Charlie's skull-cap. He saw that Charlie was a European, but, as Ping Wang said later, it was better that he should discover it than some of the street loafers, who would probably have set to work to find out the reason for an Englishman being disguised as a Chinaman.

“ We had better go back at once,” Ping Wang said, as they quitted the shop, and they walked to their temporary home without further adventure.

The manager was highly amused on hearing of Charlie’s mishap, but when his merriment had subsided he gave the brothers a few words of advice.

“ You will have to be very careful indeed when you get away from the treaty ports,” he said, earnestly, “ for if people discovered you in Chinese attire, they would think that you were disguised for some evil purpose. Of course, there are some missionaries who wear Chinese dress, but the people know them, and understand their reasons. But you, not being missionaries, would naturally be regarded with great suspicion, and would probably be punished severely — perhaps executed.”

“ I will remember what you have said,” Fred answered, “ and I am very much obliged to you.”

“And so am I,” Charlie declared. “My brother and I will be very careful after to-day.”

The conversation was now changed to home affairs, for the manager, being a thoroughbred Englishman, was anxious to hear the latest news of London.

Soon after lunch they went aboard the *Canton*, which they found to be a small and poky vessel. The saloon placed at their disposal was very similar to the after-saloons which Charlie and Ping had seen in the North Sea steam trawlers; that is to say, the bunks were round the table.

The trip to Tien-tsin occupied several days, and all on board, except the skipper and his mate, being Chinamen, Charlie and Fred were compelled to speak very little, and then only in an undertone, for fear that they should be overheard. However, they managed to enjoy themselves, as Ping Wang taught them several exciting Chinese games.

“In which direction do you intend to

if they are not worried, they will soon be well again."

For a moment the Chinese boatman was silent.

"I will take them," he said, at length, "if my honorable brother, Ping Wang, will promise that if they become very ill he will throw them overboard, so that they shall not die in my boat."

"I promise," Ping Wang said, and he had no qualms about making that vow, for Fred and Charlie were in splendid health, and it was very unlikely that they would become seriously ill during the two days' journey up-river.

"It seems to me," Charlie said, when he heard of the arrangement that had been made, "that I shall never make a really enjoyable trip on water. My first voyage I made as a cook, and had a bullying skipper to worry me. Then I escaped to what I thought was a mission ship, but it turned out to be a rascally coper. On the *Canton* I had to

pretend that I was a Chinaman, and now, if I get ill, I'm to be thrown overboard."

"You have told the boatman that my brother and I are suffering from bad eyes," Fred remarked to Ping Wang; "but he will see at a glance that there is nothing the matter with them."

"I have thought of that," Ping Wang answered, "and have bought a pair of Chinese goggles for each of you. I wonder that I didn't think of them when we were at Hongkong, for they will make your disguise much more complete. At present your eyes do not look at all like Chinamen's."

Charles and Fred at once put on the goggles which Ping Wang gave them, and the skipper declared that now, if they did not speak aloud, no one would guess that they were not Chinamen.

"We ought to go at once," said Ping Wang; and, after shaking hands with the skipper, the three travellers quitted the *Canton*, and made their way toward the boat.

In less than five minutes the three travelers reached the spot where it was moored. It was a long, heavy boat. The cargo was packed in the middle of the boat, and near the stern was a roughly-made awning, composed of mats and dirty-looking cloth, which had been erected for the comfort of Ping Wang's invalids.

Charlie and Fred walked aboard in silence, and assumed invalids' airs with so much success that the boatman, believing them to be seriously ill, said to Ping Wang, as he passed him, "Honorable brother, do not forget the promise which you made to your worthless servant — that if the honorable lords with sore eyes get worse you will throw them into the river."

"Have I not promised you?" Ping Wang asked, haughtily. "Do you doubt my word?"

The boatman protested, humbly, that Ping Wang's word could not possibly be doubted

by his disreputable servant, adding, moreover, that he lived simply to obey him.

The wooden seats under the awning were hard and uncomfortable, and Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang were soon tired of sitting there, especially as they dared not talk, for fear of being overheard. Once Ping Wang caught the boatman peeping under the awning. He seized him quickly, and demanded his reason for prying on the sick travellers.

"Noble brother," the boatman answered, trembling with fear, "I wanted to see if they were dying."

"They are getting better," Ping Wang declared. "It is a good thing for you that they are not dying, for their father is as rich as a mandarin; and if I had to throw them overboard he would certainly have you executed."

Ping Wang's romancing had the desired effect. The boatman shook with fear, and, kowtowing before Ping Wang, groaned aloud.

“ I shall be glad if they will die in my boat,” he declared, without the slightest intention of intimating that he hoped that Charlie and Fred would die. He was too excited to speak calmly; for, though he dreaded the spirits, he had a greater fear of mandarins.

From that minute Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang were left undisturbed. The boatman’s four assistants shunned the awning, as if it sheltered lepers, and were apparently greatly relieved when an opportunity came for them to go ashore and tow the boat. The boatman remained on board, but, except when Ping Wang addressed him, kept at a respectful distance from the passengers.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE journey up-river was a very tedious one, and promised to be longer than Ping Wang had expected, for, as soon as darkness came up, the boat was moored for the night near a riverside village. The boatman declared in a very humble tone that he dared not go any farther until daybreak for fear of being attacked by pirates.

On the following morning, at daybreak, the journey was resumed, but before the travellers had covered two miles, while the mist was still hanging over the river, Ping Wang noticed a boat rapidly overtaking them. It was a long, narrow craft, paddled by eight men. Another man knelt in the bows, and two more stood up in the stern. The latter were armed with old-fashioned rifles.

“Pirates!” the boat-owner shouted in

terror when he had glanced at the pursuers, and instantly there was a panic among his men. One of them dived into the river and swam toward the bank; but the other three, who could not swim, ceased rowing, and hid themselves among the cargo.

“ Make the cowards row,” Ping Wang commanded the boat-owner, but without any result, for the man was himself terror-stricken.

“ Hasn’t the wretched man got any weapons aboard? ” Charlie said, aloud.

Ping Wang translated Charlie’s question, and the boat-owner answered promptly, “ Your miserable slave has one gun, which does not belong to him. He is taking it to a mandarin. Your wretched servant does not know where it was bought.”

“ Never mind about that,” Ping Wang declared, guessing at once that the fellow had a rifle which had been stolen from some European. “ Bring it here at once.”

The boat-owner produced quickly a long

bundle of cloth, and from the middle of it pulled out a rifle.

"A Lee-Metford," Fred exclaimed, as he snatched the rifle out of the man's hand.

"Where is the ammunition?"

"Here it is," Ping Wang said, as he burst open a box and displayed several packets of cartridges.

"That is splendid," Fred declared, as he opened a packet. Like many London medical students, he had become a Volunteer, and was, moreover, a good shot. Having placed the open packet of cartridges beside him, he took up the rifle, and, after loading it, raised it to his shoulder, but did not yet fire. "I won't shoot," he said, "until I am sure they mean to attack us."

He had not long to wait before receiving proof of the pirates' intention. The boat was approaching fast, and when it was about a hundred yards from them, the pirates fired. Their rifles made a tremendous

noise, and the travellers' boat was hit about an inch above water.

"That is enough," Fred declared, and, placing his left foot on a seat and resting his left elbow on his knee, he took aim and fired.

"Good shot, Fred!" Charlie cried, as one of the pirates who had fired on them fell forward, wounded, among his comrades. The pirates had evidently not expected such a reception, and the result of Fred's shot filled them with dismay. They ceased rowing, and took counsel for a few moments.

"Look out, Fred," Charlie said, "there is a man in the bow with a breech-loader. He's aiming at you."

Just as he spoke the man fired, and the bullet whizzed perilously near to Fred's head.

"Get under cover," Charlie begged, but Fred replied, calmly, "I can do best where I am."

Again he fired, and this time he smashed the blade of an oar.

Finding that no one was hit by that shot, the pirates took courage, and the three men with guns fired simultaneously, but without doing any damage.

"I'll give them the magazine," Fred said, and fired eight times in quick succession. How many men he hit they never knew. Charlie and Ping Wang saw five men throw up their arms, while a sixth, who fell overboard, made such frantic efforts to save himself that the boat capsized.

"Now row," Ping Wang shouted, and, pulling the three boatmen from their hiding-places, pushed them back to their oars. Seeing that all danger was gone, the men smiled happily as they resumed work, and were not at all ashamed of their recent cowardice.

Charlie turned to his brother. "Fred, I am awfully proud of you — you have saved our lives! I wish I had joined the Volunteers. But, I say," he continued, "put on

your goggles, or the boatmen will see that you are not a Chinaman."

"They must have found that out some minutes ago," Fred answered, "for we have been talking ever since we saw the pirates."

"Perhaps they did not notice it," Ping Wang suggested; but he soon discovered that this was not the case.

While Fred, from force of habit, was cleaning the rifle after using it, the boat-owner approached the travellers, and said to Ping Wang: "The foreigner shoots very straight in spite of his sore eyes."

"He has saved your life," Ping Wang replied, sharply. "If he had not shot the pirates, they would have killed all of us."

"That is true, honorable brother. I and my men are full of gratitude."

"Then you must all vow not to tell any one that he is a foreigner."

The boatman considered the matter for a few moments. "We will promise. We will

take an oath," he declared at length. He lighted a piece of paper, and, as it burned to ashes, he expressed the hope that, if he told any one that the two men with goggles were foreigners, he might also be totally destroyed by fire. The other men took the oath in the same fashion.

"Will they keep it?" Charlie inquired, when Ping Wang had made known to Fred and him the nature of the oath.

"I cannot be sure of it," Ping Wang said.

"I will keep this rifle until we reach the end of our river-trip," Fred declared.

Shortly after the sun had set, the boat arrived at the place where Ping Wang had decided to land.

"The foreigners and I will not land until daybreak," he said to the boat-owner.

"Moor the boat. It will be safer for us to begin our journey by daylight," Ping Wang said to Charlie and Fred, after telling them that they were to remain on board until the morning. "I have not travelled by the

road we are going to take since I was a small boy, and consequently it is not familiar to me. There is another road which leads to Kwang-ngan, but it is more frequented than the one by which we are to travel. Our road is a roundabout one, and rarely used since the shorter road has been made. I hope that we shall meet very few people."

"How far shall we have to walk before we reach the first village?" Charlie asked.

"About five miles; and Kwang-ngan is six miles beyond that."

"Then we shall be there to-morrow night, I suppose."

"I hope so. By the bye, do you feel hungry?"

"Very," Charlie answered, speaking for Fred as well as for himself.

"Then I'll ask the boat-owner to sell us a couple of ducks I know he has on board."

Ping Wang returned to his friends presently, holding in his hands two well-cooked ducks.

"We shall soon polish these off," Charlie said, as he, Fred, and Ping Wang took their seats under the awning, with the ducks on a big wooden plate on their knees.

"Your appetite always was enormous," Fred remarked. "But I was thinking whether we ought not to save one of them. Ping Wang, shall we have any difficulty in obtaining food to-morrow?"

"I don't think so," Ping Wang replied. "However, it would be a good thing to save one of the birds until the morning, so that we may have a good meal to start the day."

One duck was therefore kept, and the other eaten. Ten minutes after the meal, Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang were sound asleep, with the duck near them on the wooden dish in which it had been served up. When they awoke at daybreak the dish was where they had left it, but the duck had disappeared.

"This is serious," Ping Wang said. "One of the boatmen must have stolen it. I will ask them."

.

He did so; but the men promptly vowed that they had not stolen the duck. They did not appear at all surprised, however, when the accusation was made, and Ping Wang concluded that they were not speaking the truth.

“As you have stolen the duck,” Ping Wang continued, sternly, “you must return to me the money which I gave for it.”

“Would my honorable brother rob his slave?” the boat-owner asked, in alarm.

“Yes. If you cannot give me the duck, I must have back the price I paid for it. If you cannot give me the money, I will keep the rifle which the foreigner is holding.”

This decision alarmed the boat-owner. “Honorable brother,” he said, after a few moments’ silence, “I will search for the duck; perhaps it has rolled off the dish.”

He searched in what appeared to Ping Wang to be very unlikely places, and found the missing dainty in a basket on top of the pile of cargo.

"The rifle shall be given you," said Ping Wang, and then turned to speak to Charlie and Fred. "We had better breakfast on shore," he said; "let us land at once."

Ping Wang handed over the Lee-Metford to the boat-owner, and the three travellers stepped ashore, thoroughly glad to get out of the boat.

As soon as the travellers had landed, they set out on the road to Kwang-ngan, eating the second duck as they went. They understood perfectly that they were about to begin the most dangerous part of their journey.

"Don't appear surprised at anything you see or hear," was Ping Wang's sensible advice, "and remember that an exclamation from either of you would probably lead to its being discovered that you are not Chinamen."

Charlie and Fred promised not to forget what he had said.

When they had trudged about three-quarters of a mile they joined the main road to

the village for which they were bound, and from now onwards at every few yards they met a Chinaman.

The Pages thoroughly enjoyed the novel scene. Chinamen of almost all stations of life seemed to be using that road. One moment they would see a pompous-looking man riding on a sturdy, shaggy pony; the next, a dandy, being carried in a palanquin. Coolies with a long pole across one shoulder, and a basket or bundle hanging from each end, hurried past them at a shuffling kind of run. Heavier loads were carried on poles, which rested on the shoulders of two coolies. Occasionally some pedestrian would make a friendly remark to the three travellers, and when that happened Ping Wang replied in the most genial manner.

When they had been on the tramp for about an hour and a half, Ping Wang looked round, and, seeing that no Chinamen were near, said, as he pointed to a square-looking

object in the distance, "That is Su-ching, our first halting-place."

After this the three friends were compelled to remain silent, so constantly were they meeting people, and the nearer they drew to the town the more numerous did the people become. The town was enclosed by a brick wall, and from a distance looked able to withstand the attack of any enemy; but a closer inspection showed that the defences were practically worthless, and that the town could be quickly destroyed by modern guns. In some places the walls had crumbled away. Some of the guns were so old and rusty that to have fired them would have done more harm to the gunners than to the enemy. But most of the guns were dummies — wooden things, mounted to give a formidable look to the place.

"Will there be any difficulty about getting into the town?" Fred whispered.

"Oh, no!" Ping Wang replied. "We will enter by that gate facing us. There will

probably be some soldiers there, but they won't interfere with us."

Ten minutes later Ping Wang and the Pages arrived at the open gate, near which were some half-dozen dirty rascals playing some Chinese game. They were soldiers, but so interested were they in their game that they did not even glance at the people passing in and out. Ping Wang told Fred and Charlie, later, that these imitations of soldiers usually passed their time in that fashion.

Once in the town Charlie and Fred felt that they were comparatively safe, for it seemed that among the large population they would escape notice. No one appeared to suspect that they were not Chinamen, and Ping Wang, who had recently been regretting he had induced the Pages to take part in such a dangerous enterprise, became convinced that they would reach the house for which they were bound without any difficulty. The reason for entering the town was

to discover from a cousin of his, who resided there, if Chin Choo were still alive. He knew that it was a risky thing for him to do to bring the Pages into the town, but he was convinced that to have left them by themselves outside would have been far more dangerous.

“ In a few minutes,” he said, quietly, “ we shall arrive at my cousin’s house. He is a Christian, and will not let any one know that you are Englishmen. He will give us a meal, and then we can start off refreshed to Kwang-ngan.”

But before they had gone another fifty yards, and just as they were passing a big building, which Ping Wang whispered was the residence of some high official, some twenty Yamên runners, or policemen, suddenly rushed out of the courtyard and seized the three of them. The men were armed with swords, and to have resisted would have been madness. Ping Wang indignantly asked to be told why they were treated thus,

but got no reply. Charlie and Fred had the good sense not to utter a word, for, although they believed that it had been discovered that they were Europeans, they were determined not to convict themselves. With unnecessary roughness they were hurried into the courtyard from which their captors had sallied, and before long a mandarin came out of the house to inspect them. He was not attired in his official clothes, and did not come within twenty yards of the prisoners, but after a glance at them made some remark to the leader of the men who had captured them, and then returned indoors.

Ping Wang was still ignorant of the cause of their arrest, but, as no cries of "Foreigners!" had been raised, he knew that it had not yet been discovered that Charlie and Fred were Europeans. Once again he demanded to be told why they had been arrested, but, instead of replying, the leader raised his bamboo cane menacingly. As Ping Wang had no desire to be beaten, he

made no further efforts to solve the mystery of their arrest. His sole anxiety now was as to what would be done to them. That they were supposed to have committed some crime he guessed, and that they would be punished, although they had not been tried, he was also sure.

Without any delay, Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang were marched out of the courtyard, and through the streets, until they came to a large building, which Ping Wang recognized with dismay as a prison. But, with a thrill of hope, he found that they were not taken into the prison, but marched round the wall until they came to a spot where there were half a dozen wooden collars lying on the ground. These wooden collars are very much like the old English pillory, with the exception that the person who has to wear the instrument is not placed on a platform, but stands or sits on the ground.

Charlie and Fred did not recognize the instruments of punishment, and, when they

were suddenly flung to the ground, they imagined that they were about to be executed. As they felt the collars tighten round their necks, and had their hands pushed through two holes lower down on the wooden board, they came to the conclusion that they were to be tortured to death. But when they found that nothing more was done to them, they turned their heads — as far as their wooden collars would permit — to see how their companion was faring. Then, seeing each other, they understood the nature of their punishment.

The Chinamen, having chained the wooden collars to the prison wall, departed, leaving the three prisoners to the tender mercies of any passers-by.

“ Now they are all gone I must speak,” Charlie exclaimed. “ How long will they keep us in these things? ”

“ I haven’t the faintest idea,” Ping Wang answered.

For fully half an hour they did not speak a

word. Scores of people passed them during that time, but very few took any notice of them, for it was by no means an unusual sight to see prisoners there. Two or three chaffed them, but no one molested them. Their first tormentors were two boys, who walked up and down in front of them, pulling their noses as they passed; but, fortunately, an official, whose duty it was to pay periodical visits to men in their position, came in sight, and the young rascals fled in alarm.

This official, who was aged, smiled with delight at having caused the boys to go without much exertion on his part. He wore a hat which reminded Charlie and Fred of a candle-extinguisher. In other respects his costume did not differ from that of any ordinary Chinaman.

“Venerable uncle,” Ping Wang exclaimed as soon as the old man reached them, “why are your dogs of servants placed in the wooden collars?”

The old man smiled, for in his time he had heard hundreds of prisoners ask that question. Nevertheless, he replied, for he always treated prisoners courteously, having seen many respectable men in the position of his questioner.

“ Did not my honorable brothers steal a horse that belonged to the foreigners? ” he asked.

“ Your dogs of servants have not stolen anything.”

The old man laughed incredulously. “ The foreigners say that you did,” he declared.

“ They have not seen us.”

“ But they have declared to the mandarin that three men stole their horse at day-break. Therefore you were arrested.”

Having given this very unsatisfactory piece of information, the old man calmly walked away.

When he was out of hearing, Ping Wang said to his friends in misfortune: “ We are arrested for horse stealing. Some foreign-

ers — missionaries, I imagine, as there are not likely to be any other Europeans in this place — have complained that they have had their horse stolen by three men. Evidently the mandarin, or one of his subordinates, promised to inquire into the matter, and, in order to give the missionaries the impression that they had caught the thieves, ordered the arrest of any three men. Apparently we happened to be passing just as the Yamên runners started out, and therefore they took us. Now the mandarin will inform the missionaries that he has had the thieves caught and punished.”

Nothing more was said by either of the unfortunate prisoners for nearly an hour, so continuously were people passing to and fro. Their necks were aching terribly, and, in spite of their determination not to lose heart, they became very dispirited.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN hour passed, and Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang were still in the wooden collars. Charlie and Fred closed their eyes; but, as they did not succeed in getting any sleep, after ten minutes' endeavor they gave up the attempt, and had a short conversation in low tones. Ping Wang was lamenting that he had persuaded the Pages to come to China, when they heard a shout of "Foreigners!" and turning their eyes in the direction from which it came they saw a European approaching. He wore a beehive hat, but the remainder of his attire was European.

"He is coming toward us!" Fred exclaimed, joyfully.

"But he won't be able to set us free," Charlie answered.

"He is a missionary," Ping Wang declared, "and you may be sure that he will do all that he possibly can to help us out of our trouble. Come closer!" he shouted, in Chinese. "We want to speak to you."

"I say," Charlie exclaimed, "it's Barton, the old 'International!'"

"So it is," Fred said, delightedly, feeling certain that a resourceful football player, such as Barton had proved himself to be times innumerable, would devise some means for freeing them.

"Well," said Barton, smiling, "you're collared." And Charlie and Fred laughed. "How did you get in this fix?" Barton continued, seriously; and Ping Wang related in a few words how they had been arrested. "This is very unfortunate," Barton declared. "Early this morning one of our converts saw three men make off with my colleague's horse. I reported the theft to the Chinese officials, and urged that steps should be taken to detect the thieves. I suppose that

to save the trouble of making inquiries they arrested you. I received information about an hour ago that the thieves had been caught, and I came out to see if I knew the men. Now I must hurry away, and see if I can get you set at liberty. It will be difficult, I fear; but you may rely on my doing my best."

Barton hurried away, leaving the prisoners in much better spirits. Nearly two hours passed before he returned, and they had begun to fear that his efforts on their behalf had not been successful.

"Barton's smiling," Charlie whispered, as the missionary drew near. "We are going to be released. I should like to give old Barton a cheer. It wouldn't be the first I have given him by many a score."

"Don't talk," Ping Wang said; and in a few minutes the men who had arrested them had unlocked the collars, and set them free.

"Come with me," Barton said, as they rose from their cramped position on the ground.



"THE MEN UNLOCKED THE COLLARS."

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R

L

“ Can you speak Chinese? ” he asked the Pages, when they had walked a few yards; and, on their replying that they only knew a few words, added, “ Then we will speak English. You need not fear that it will arouse suspicion, for several of our native Christians have learnt English. By the bye, I am sorry to have kept you waiting; the officials knew very well that they had arrested the wrong men; but when I told them that such was the case, they flatly contradicted me. However, after we had a long conversation, they told me that they would set you free, but would not arrest anybody else. I agreed to that at once, and they seemed quite as pleased as I was at the result of my interview.”

“ We are very grateful to you — ” Charlie began, but Barton stopped him.

“ My dear fellow, you have nothing to thank me for. In fact, I am the innocent cause of the hardship you have undergone; for if I had not complained of our horse

having been stolen, you would not have been arrested. But I hope," he continued, "you have not suffered from the wooden collars."

"Our necks have. Mine is horribly stiff."

"We can remedy that with embrocation. When we reach our house—we shall soon be there—you had better have a bath at once."

The Pages and Ping Wang were very pleased when they reached the mission station, and were able to indulge in the luxury of a warm bath. Having bathed, rubbed their necks with embrocation, and well shaken their clothes, they strolled out on to the veranda, where Barton was waiting for them. He led the way along the veranda, which ran the length of the building, and turned into a large, airy, plainly furnished dining-room. At the head of the table sat the senior missionary—a man of about fifty years of age—and facing him was his wife. An elderly lady and a young man were the other missionaries, and there were also at

the table the four children of the senior missionary.

After dinner they all went out on the veranda, and there Charlie, by request, told his new friends why he and Fred were in Su-ching disguised as Chinamen.

The senior missionary strongly advised the Pages and Ping Wang to give up their journey, declaring that if they persisted they would probably meet with worse punishment than the wooden collar.

"But the jewels belong to me," Ping Wang declared.

"I do not doubt it, but, nevertheless, Chin Choo would regard you as a common thief. Why not ask him to return the idol to you?"

"That would make him think it was more valuable than he had supposed. Moreover, he has threatened to kill me if ever he has the opportunity."

"Then why give him an opportunity?"

"I do not mean to. We will wait at

Kwang-ngan until we get a chance of regaining the idol without being found out."

A little later Ping Wang's cousin arrived at the missionary's house, and was able to give the travellers some valuable information. He had paid a visit to Kwang-ngan during the previous week, and had seen Chin Choo on several occasions. One evening as he passed Chin Choo's house, he saw — the gate being open — the idol which the mandarin had stolen from Ping Wang's father, standing in the front room nearest the road.

To discover the room in which Chin Choo kept his stolen idol, Ping Wang had considered the most difficult part of their undertaking, and now that the information had been obtained without any exertion on their part, he felt surer than ever that the jewels would soon be in their possession.

"Our friends are tired," the senior missionary said to his colleagues, about two hours after dinner, "so we will have the evening service at once."

The gong was sounded, and soon the native English-speaking servants filed into the big room in which the Europeans were assembled. It was long since the Pages had worshipped among their own people, and as they listened to the prayers, and joined in the evening hymn, they felt that this was one of the most peaceful half-hours they had ever experienced; and before rising from their knees, they thanked God, silently but earnestly, for having brought them safely through so many dangers. Then, bidding good night to their kind hosts, they retired to the large, three-bedded room which had been placed at their disposal.

It was their intention to resume their journey early the following morning; but a few hours after they had turned in, Charlie and Fred were awakened by hearing Ping Wang groaning.

Jumping out of bed they lighted the lamp and looked anxiously at their friend.

“What’s the matter, old boy?” Charlie

asked, but Ping Wang evidently did not hear.

“He’s unconscious,” Fred said. “Call Barton, for he knows more about fever than I do.”

Fred soon saw that he had acted wisely in sending for Barton, as the missionary thoroughly understood what it was necessary to do in such cases.

For an hour or so there was, however, no improvement in the patient’s condition, and Barton decided to sit up with him.

“No,” Fred said, “let me sit up. I’m a medical student, and it’s my right to look after the patient.”

“Medical students have plenty of pluck, I know,” Barton replied, with a smile, “but they cannot defy nature with impunity. You are completely fagged out, and if you don’t turn in at once I shall have two patients to-morrow instead of one.”

Charlie and Fred were soon sound asleep, and it was not until nine o’clock in the morn-

ing that Fred awoke. He relieved Barton at once, and the missionary went away to get a brief rest.

About an hour after Barton had gone out, Ping Wang awoke, and, to the delight of his two friends, spoke rationally. They forbade him, however, to talk, and told him that the quieter he kept, the quicker would be his recovery. He was an excellent patient, and the result of his obedience was that, in three days, he was able to leave his bed. But his illness left him very weak, and Barton and Fred agreed that it would be dangerous for him to attempt to proceed to Kwang-ngan until a fortnight had elapsed. This prolonged delay was, of course, a disappointment to the three travellers, but they enjoyed their stay immensely. When Ping Wang became strong enough to leave the veranda, Barton took him and the Pages to see his Chinese school. It was a most novel sight; but what pleased the Pages most was to find

of that hole," Ping Wang said to the Pages, in an undertone. " Shall we? "

" Certainly," Charlie answered.

Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang walked up to the cart, and, putting forth all their strength, moved it, at the first attempt, out of the rut in which it had stuck. The Chinaman thanked them profusely for their help. His wife said nothing, but stared at Charlie in a way that made him feel quite uncomfortable. He was much relieved when, in obedience to her husband's call to come and take her seat, she toddled off toward the vehicle.

" It's a wonder," Charlie whispered to Fred, " that she doesn't fall on her nose. If she did it would not spoil it, for it's flat already. Hallo, what's Ping Wang saying to the old man? "

In a few moments they knew. Ping Wang came over to them, and said, quietly, " These people are on their way to Kwang-ngan, and they will drive us there for one hundred cash."

A cash is a copper coin with a square hole in the middle. Its value is about a fifth of an English farthing. These coins are carried strung together, and their value being so small a man can have a heavy load of coppers without being even moderately rich.

“It’s cheap,” Fred answered. “Let us accept.”

Ping Wang therefore informed his noble brother that the sons of dogs would have the pleasure of riding in his magnificent carriage. Before they had travelled far the Pages came to the conclusion that the ride was by no means a cheap one, and that instead of paying to ride they ought to have been paid, so frequently were they called upon to pull or push the cart out of some rut in which it stuck fast. They felt that the wily old Chinaman had made a very good bargain, and if they had been able to speak Chinese they would have told him so. Charlie, however, disliked the woman much more than he did her husband. She stared at him

almost continuously while they were on the cart, and when he was in the road helping to get the vehicle out of a rut, he could see her still peeping out at him. When the cart had stuck in the mud for the tenth time in half an hour, Charlie whispered to Fred, as they were extricating it, "I have had enough of this. Let's walk."

Fred nodded his head, and then told Ping Wang their decision. Ping Wang was as ready as they to get away from the cart, and when it had been pushed and pulled out of the rut he informed the cart-owner that they were about to leave him.

"Noble brother," he said, "if your dogs of servants walk, your magnificent carriage will be lighter, and not stick in the mud so frequently."

"Noble brother," the cart-owner answered, with a savage expression on his face, which proved that he considered Ping Wang far from being noble, "you will not forget

that you promised to pay your humble slave one hundred cash."

Ping Wang paid the cart-owner. But when the woman saw that the money was safe in her husband's wallet, she stretched forth her hand, seized Charlie's pigtail, and tugged at it with all her strength.

"Foreigner!" she screamed as she fell backwards in the cart with the pigtail, and skull-cap attached, in her hand.

"Foreigners!" the man shouted, on seeing Charlie's unmistakably European head — for his beehive had fallen off — and, seizing Ping Wang's pigtail with both hands, pulled it with tremendous force.

Ping Wang shouted with pain, but the cart-owner being convinced that if he pulled hard enough the pigtail would come off, tugged still more vigorously.

In great pain Ping Wang suddenly turned right about, and, before the cart-owner had time to move, seized his own pigtail with his mouth, about an inch from his tormentor's

hands, and held it tight between his teeth. The cart-owner continued to tug viciously, but Ping Wang struck him several blows on the face with his fist, and finally compelled him to release his hold.

In the meanwhile Charlie had climbed into the cart, and was struggling with the Chinese woman to regain his pigtail. At first he thought that she was sitting on it, but when he pulled her up, he found he had been mistaken.

"Foreigner! Foreigner!" she screamed as he searched about the cart, and frequently she struck him with her open hands.

"If you won't keep quiet, madam," Charlie said, "I shall have to put you out."

He caught hold of her with the intention of lifting her out, so that he might search the cart undisturbed. But the moment that he touched her she screamed frantically. Her husband was too busy holding his bruised face to heed her, but Ping Wang went at once to see what was happening, and

finding that Charlie was lifting her bodily, shouted, "Put her down, Charlie. Don't touch her!"

"But she has hidden my pigtail," Charlie protested.

"Never mind. Don't touch her again, for it's a terrible insult to a Chinese woman to lay hands on her. Put her down and jump out."

Charlie put the woman down, jumped out of the cart, and picked up his "beehive," but he was very indignant at having been robbed of his pigtail. To stop the cartman from following them, he caught hold of the horse, and led it into the thickest mud, where the wheels sank in almost to the axle.

They started off at a trot immediately, the Chinaman and his wife yelling after them insulting remarks. Fortunately, there was no one about just then, and the three travellers were out of sight before the cartman and his wife had an opportunity of telling

any one about the foreigners whom they had seen disguised as Chinamen.

When they had run for about a quarter of a mile, they began to walk, and discussed what should be done to hide the loss of Charlie's pigtail.

"To start with," Fred said, "we had better take off our goggles now."

"If you can hide the loss until we get to Kwang-ngan," said Ping Wang, "I will buy you a new one. Put your 'beehive' on the back of your head."

Charlie did so, but as he was without a skull-cap, his European forehead was most noticeable.

"That will never do," Ping Wang declared. "Put your beehive as it was before. We will walk in single file; I in front of you, and Fred behind you."

In that order they had walked for nearly two miles, when a man, passing in the opposite direction, mistook Fred for an acquaintance. He stopped short, and shook his own

hands. Fred knew that the Chinese, when they meet a friend, instead of shaking his hand, shake their own. Wishing to be polite, he shook his own hands in reply.

Then the Chinaman made some remark. Fortunately, Ping Wang, having been nudged by Charlie, turned round, and seeing Fred being addressed by a Chinaman, explained that Fred was a man of weak intellect. The Chinaman was astonished, but having satisfied himself that Fred was not the man he had fancied, went on his way, turning round, however, after walking a few yards, to have a look at the three friends. Then he noticed that Charlie had no pigtail, and immediately shouted jeering remarks at him.

Ping Wang told the Pages what the man had said, and they agreed that it would be unwise for Charlie to enter Kwang-ngan as he was.

“ I will leave you outside the city,” Ping Wang said, “ and come back to you as soon as I have bought a new queue.”

“ But suppose somebody speaks to us? ”

They were wondering what would be best, when Fred seized Ping Wang by the arm, and pointed to a spot some two hundred yards away from them.

“ Are they human heads? ” he gasped.

“ They are,” Ping Wang answered, gravely, and when they had gone a little nearer, all three could see clearly the heads of six Chinamen hanging by their pigtails from six tall canes.

“ I have an idea,” Fred said. “ I do not like the notion, but we are in a difficulty, and as we *must* have another pigtail I think we need not have any scruples about cutting off one of these.”

“ I don’t like it,” said Charlie.

“ But it will be a great pity, and it may be dangerous, too, if we miss this opportunity,” Ping Wang declared. “ By taking one of these pigtails we shall lessen the risk of being found out.”

“ Very well, then,” Charlie said, “ I will

wear the pigtail. Let us get it and be off as soon as possible."

"We must not try to get it until after dark," Ping Wang replied. "We must hide until then."

CHAPTER XVI.

AFTER strolling some distance, the three travellers discovered the ruins of an old brick building. They entered it, and found that there were no signs of its being used by any one.

“ The first thing to do is to have something to eat,” said Charlie.

He took from his pocket some of the food which the missionaries had given them. Fred and Ping Wang followed his example, but in the middle of their meal Charlie startled them by declaring that their plan for getting him a pigtail was not worth carrying out.

“ What is the good of my having a pig-tail? ” he asked. “ I haven’t a skull-cap, and it can’t be sewn to my ‘ beehive.’ ”

"I will lend you my skull-cap," Ping Wang said.

"Thank you," Charlie said. "But how are we going to sew the pigtail to the cap?"

"I have a pin," Fred replied. "We must use that for a needle; and as for thread we must pull some out of our clothing. That can easily be managed."

As he was speaking, he rummaged about the inside of his coat, and succeeded at last in pulling out about a yard of blue cotton. Then they sat down on portions of the ruin which had fallen in, and prepared to wait until it was dark enough to carry out their unpleasant but necessary task.

Three holes in the wall commanded a view of the surrounding country, and they were satisfied that there was no one near them at present. For nearly an hour they chatted quietly. But, when Charlie peeped out again, he started back with a little cry of surprise.

“Hallo!” he said, “here comes the old woman who stole my pigtail.”

Fred and Ping Wang sprang to their feet, and saw the cart in which they had ridden coming slowly along the road.

“I say, I should like to recover my pigtail,” said Charlie. “Let us run out and take it from her.”

“No, no,” Ping Wang protested. “While we were struggling to get hold of it some one would be sure to see us. There’s a man coming along now.”

The occupants of the cart began to speak to the man some moments before he met them. After a time the woman produced Charlie’s pigtail, and handed it to the man to look at. For a few moments he examined it carefully, and apparently he came to the conclusion that he had as much right to it as the woman, for suddenly he rushed off with it. The cart-owner shouted to him to come back; his wife shuffled out of the cart and hobbled a yard or two after the thief,

but soon realized that she would not be able to catch him. The Pages and Ping Wang thoroughly enjoyed the scene.

“ The old lady does not appear to be in a hurry to go,” Charlie remarked. “ Hallo! she’s coming over to look at the heads.”

But when the woman had hobbled to the nearest pole, she contented herself with looking up at its grim burden, and then began to hobble back toward her cart. But, before she had gone five yards, she noticed the ruin in which the Pages and Ping Wang were hiding. She stood still and gazed at it.

“ She is coming over here to see what this place is! ” said Charlie.

“ She is! ” Fred declared, and, as he spoke, the woman began to hobble in their direction.

“ What shall we do? ” Charlie whispered.

“ Stay here,” Ping Wang answered. “ We must lie down flat and then she may overlook us.”

“Down we go,” Fred said; “she’s very near.”

About a minute later they heard the woman approach the hole in the wall, through which they had been watching her. From a grunt of annoyance which she uttered, they knew that she was not tall enough to see through. They could hear her hobbling round to the next hole, and from another grunt they guessed that she found it, like the other, above her reach. She toddled round to the third hole, which was lower down. When they heard her stop before it, they held their breath and lay motionless, wondering whether she would see them. Their suspense was soon at an end.

“Foreigners!” she shouted, wildly.

“Come on, Fred — come on, Ping Wang!” cried Charlie, jumping up; “we must bolt.”

The Chinese woman was so startled by his voice that she moved hurriedly back, and, being unsteady on her tiny crippled feet, she

toppled over and fell, shouting to her husband to come and catch the foreigners.

“ There is no one about,” Fred declared, when all three had scrambled out of their hiding-place, “ so we will get a pigtail at once.”

Fred and Ping Wang without a moment's hesitation ran to the nearest execution pole, and by tugging vigorously at it brought it to the ground.

“ Have you a knife? ” Fred said to Ping Wang, who immediately produced one, which, fortunately, was fairly sharp. Quickly, and as reverently as possible, Fred performed the task which his brother's need had made necessary, and placing the pigtail in his pocket he started off, accompanied by Ping Wang, to rejoin Charlie, who had been having a busy and exciting time. When Fred and Ping Wang ran to obtain a pigtail, he dashed off toward the cart, and the cartman, seeing him coming, and believing that he intended to rob him of his one

hundred cash, left his horse and vehicle and bolted across country. But Charlie, of course, had no intention of acting the highway robber. He unharnessed the horse, and turning him round started him off in the direction from which he had come. But the horse knew that his stable was at Kwang-ngan, and had a very natural objection to being sent in the reverse direction. After trotting about twenty yards he turned round, and, breaking into a gallop, approached Charlie, who stood in the middle of the track, with arms extended, to stop his progress. But the cunning horse pretended that he was going to pass on the right of Charlie, and, as soon as Charlie jumped aside to stop him, changed his course suddenly and shot by him on the left.

It was fortunate, however, that the horse did insist upon going toward Kwang-ngan, for, when the Pages and Ping Wang followed in the same direction, they saw two Chinamen coming toward them.

"Let us pretend that the horse has escaped from us," Charlie suggested, and they broke into a run. The horse hearing their footsteps, changed his leisurely walk to a trot. The Chinamen made no attempt to stop him, but stood aside to let him pass, and laughed and jeered at the pursuers.

"Well, I am glad that they did not stop the horse," Charlie declared. "But what are we going to do now? Chase that wretched horse all the way to Kwang-ngan?"

"No," Ping Wang replied. "We must leave the horse. We must take that track on the left, get round the town, and enter it by the gate on the far side. To enter it by the one on this side would be very risky, as the cartman and his wife will tell every one they meet that we are bound for Kwang-ngan, and some of my more violent anti-foreign countrymen are sure to start in pursuit of us."

They left the main track and joined a

little used one which led round the town. For half an hour they marched along in single file without meeting or catching sight of any other human beings. Night came on, and they were about a mile from the town, when they heard the shouts of an advancing mob.

“We must hide: follow me!” Ping Wang exclaimed, and ran in the direction of the town. The ground between the track and the town wall was very uneven, and abounded in little hollows which would have afforded ample concealment, but Ping Wang did not halt until they had run fully half a mile.

“Let’s sit down here,” he said, panting.

They sat down in a hollow surrounded by shrubs, and listened to the shouts of the men whom they had so nearly encountered.

“I imagine that they are the members of some society,” said Ping Wang. “If they had discovered that Charlie and you were

Europeans, they would probably have killed us all."

"The best thing we could do if we do meet them," Charlie joined in, "is to pretend that we are deaf and dumb. We *are* deaf and dumb as far as Chinese is concerned. And, now, if you will give me that pigtail, I will try to sew it to this skull-cap. I've never yet tried sewing with a pin, and I fancy that it won't be an easy job."

Charlie repeated that opinion several times during the next half-hour, for, what with the difficulty of getting the head of the pin through the cap, and the cotton constantly slipping off the pin, it was a most irritating job. However, after working hard for a little more than half an hour, he finished it.

"It doesn't look at all bad," Fred declared.

Then they talked for some time of their journey, and of the treasure for which they had travelled so far.

“ There’s somebody coming! ” Fred exclaimed, stopping Ping Wang in the middle of a sentence.

They listened. “ Let’s get up and walk on,” Ping Wang said, quietly. “ I fancy there are quite fifty men approaching. Probably they are some of the men whom we heard an hour ago. There are more of them on the left, and they’re closing in on us. Remember that, if they do see us, you are both not to say a word.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THEY walked on in silence. Soon they were able to distinguish some of the men. All of them were armed — some with swords, some with sticks, and one or two with bows and arrows. None, so far as could be seen, carried firearms. They soon caught sight of the Pages and Ping Wang, and stood watching the travellers as they approached.

Concealing their excitement, Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang continued walking on until they came face to face with the men, who wore yellow cloths round their heads and also round their bodies and legs. One of them spoke sharply, and Ping Wang replied promptly and cheerfully. His reply evidently pleased them, for they spoke to him in a friendly manner. Charlie and Fred stood silently a foot or two in rear of their

friend, and, as they did not understand anything of what was being said, it was easy for them not to show any sign of interest. Suddenly one of the men spoke to Charlie, who acted his part well, continuing to gaze at Ping Wang's back, and appearing ignorant of the fact that he had been addressed. Ping Wang turned round instantly, and, with a sorrowful air, spoke to the man. Charlie and Fred guessed from Ping Wang's manner, and the surprise which his words created, that he had declared that they could not speak or understand.

When the people had, apparently, expressed their sorrow, Ping Wang suddenly addressed the crowd in a loud voice. He pointed to Charlie and Fred, and, as he did so, his tone became more indignant, his manner more excited. When he had brought his speech to an end, the crowd behaved like a gathering of madmen. Swords, spears, and sticks were flourished about in a most reckless and threatening manner.

After the performance, which might be called a war-dance, had subsided, a portly Chinaman, with a red cloth tied round his head, and cloth of a similar color covering his body and legs, advanced to within a yard of Ping Wang, and shook hands with himself. Ping Wang instantly shook his own hands. Having thus greeted each other, the two men entered into an earnest conversation, and it was clear that they were discussing a matter of importance from the manner in which the crowd closed on them, so as to hear everything that was said. And then it was that Charlie and Fred noticed that every man present was wearing either a yellow or a red cloth round his head. The majority wore yellow ones, those who were wearing red being, evidently, the body-guard of the fat gentleman who was talking to Ping Wang.

At length the conversation came to an end, and from the smile on the portly Chinaman's face Charlie and Fred concluded, rightly, that Ping Wang had succeeded in pleasing

him. But what followed puzzled them completely. The crowd moved back, leaving them with Ping Wang and the big man in the centre of a circle. Then three men advanced to join them. One was carrying a long cane, the second two lighted incense candles, and the third a handful of square pieces of paper, on which were written some Chinese characters. The fat man and Ping Wang then went down on their knees, face to face, and so close to each other that their noses almost touched. As they knelt, the man with the paper set light to one of the pieces, and tossed it in the air above the kneeling men. As he did so Ping Wang and the man opposite to him bent down their heads, and butted each other gently. When the kneeling men had butted each other seven times, the man with the cane struck Ping Wang one blow across the back. The butting ceased at once, and Ping Wang stood up, the crowd giving vent to harsh cries, which were meant for applause.

The fat man remained on his knees, and Ping Wang signed to Charlie to take the position which he had just left. Charlie was put through the same performance as Ping Wang, and when he rose up, Fred knelt down, and went through the same ceremony.

When the portly Chinaman had got on his feet, he shouted to some one in the crowd, and a man ran to him, carrying in his hand three pieces of yellow cloth. These were presented to Ping Wang and the Pages. Ping Wang did not don the yellow cloth, but placed it in his pocket, and Charlie and Fred followed his example.

The crowd now separated, some men proceeding toward Kwang-ngan, and others starting off to more distant villages. The Pages and Ping Wang went with the former; but, as they walked slowly, they were soon left behind, much to their satisfaction. Having looked round and satisfied himself that the nearest men were more than a hundred yards ahead of them, Charlie said to Ping

Wang, in an undertone, "What is the meaning of it all?"

"Simply this," Ping Wang answered with a smile, "we have been sworn in members of the Big Sword, or Boxer Society — a society which exists for the sole purpose of ferreting out and killing foreigners."

Before Charlie and Fred had recovered from the surprise of this announcement, the people in front started running quickly toward the town.

"The town gates are about to be closed for the night," Ping Wang explained. "We will stay out here until they are opened to-morrow. Let us hide among these bushes, in case any more men should come along and be suspicious of us for not hurrying."

They pushed their way through the dwarf bushes until they came to a small clearing. Then they sat down and waited silently until the last townsman had hurried by.

"They have all gone," Ping Wang declared a quarter of an hour after the last

man had passed, " so now I will tell you all about the Boxers. After we had exchanged greetings they told me that they were members of the Big Sword or Big Fist Society, commonly known as Boxers, and asked me to join them. I agreed to do so; if I had refused we should not be alive now. Then they told me that the Empress Dowager, Tsi-Hsi, and most of the mandarins were supporting them, and had approved of their plan to destroy every European and native Christian in the land. I asked when the rising was likely to take place, and was told that, as far as they knew, it would begin in about three weeks' time. Then I heard a man address you, and therefore declared at once that you could not speak, and after that I made a speech pretending to be very hostile to foreigners."

" Don't you think," said Charlie, " that we ought to hurry back to warn Barton and his friends of the threatened rising? "

" We can warn them without going back

to them. I will send word to my cousin. Since he has become a Christian, all the members of his family, excepting his youngest brother, have refused to speak to him. His youngest brother, who is in Kwangan, is very fond of him, and when I tell him of his brother's danger, he will, I am certain, hurry off to warn him — and, of course, my cousin will tell Barton."

Then they began to discuss once more the object of their visit to China — the recovery of the idol.

"I'm very anxious to get that treasure," Charlie declared, "but I feel just now as if I would willingly sell my share of it for a good meal. I'm both hungry and cold."

"Then let us walk about," Ping Wang suggested. "It will keep us warm. Our hunger we shall have to put up with for several hours, I'm afraid."

As they tried to get warm, Ping Wang told them of many curious customs of his

countrymen, to make the time pass. But in spite of his stories they became very tired and hungry, and were exceedingly thankful when, at last, daylight appeared.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE Pages and Ping Wang were among the first twenty to pass in at the town gates, and the latter at once crossed over to an inn and peeped in at the door. The glance he gave satisfied him, and he beckoned to Charlie and Fred to enter. It was not an attractive-looking place, but there was a smell of roast pork, that made the hungry travellers sniff with delight.

The dining-room into which Ping Wang led the way was very dirty, and until Charlie and Fred were told what the room was they had no idea that it was there that they were to breakfast. They sat down on a form at a little, bare wooden table, and before long were enjoying a hearty meal of roast pork and tea.

“ And now,” Fred said, when they had

satisfied their healthy appetites, "I should like to lie down and sleep."

"So should I," Charlie declared. "What kind of beds do they have here?"

"We can lie on the floor here if we like," Ping Wang answered.

"I'll do so," Charlie said, and down he went on the floor, turned his face to the wall, rested his head on his arm, and closed his eyes. Fred followed his example at once.

Ping Wang waited until his friends were asleep, and then, having satisfied himself that their pigtails were not slipping off, and that there was nothing about their appearance to attract attention, he lay down beside them.

All three slept soundly until the landlord came in and awoke Ping Wang, who had an argument with him about the price of roast pork.

"What is our next move?" Charlie asked, quietly, when the landlord had left the room.

“ To go and see my cousin,” Ping Wang replied, “ to warn him of the danger which threatens his brother and all other Christians.”

Ping Wang found his cousin — a fan-maker — at his shop. He had heard of the Boxers' intentions the day before, and had already been to his brother to warn him and his friends. This was indeed good news, and Ping Wang was anxious to tell his friends of it, but dared not, for his cousin's work-people were in the next room, and would probably hear them speaking English. He told his cousin, however, that his friends, who were standing at the door, were Englishmen, a piece of news which caused the fan-maker much uneasiness. He begged Ping Wang not to introduce him to the Englishmen, and urged him to get them out of the town as quickly as possible. Ping Wang chatted with him for a few more minutes and then departed.

The streets were now crowded with people,

and Ping Wang whispered to his friends not to speak on any account until they were safe at another inn. He led them through numerous narrow streets, and was within a hundred yards of the inn where he hoped to get a room when a man came running along the street, shouting wildly, slashing about with a whip, and driving the people back against the houses on either side. Ping Wang pushed the Pages back quickly and stood in front of them.

A few moments later Charlie and Fred understood the cause of the excitement. A gorgeous palanquin was borne rapidly past them, but not so quickly that they were unable to see the occupant. He was a fat, cruel-looking man, and took no notice whatever of the kowtowing of the people. On his head he wore a yellow cloth, such as the Boxers had worn on the previous evening, and this was regarded, as it was meant to be, as a sign that he was in sympathy with the Boxer movement.

“Chin Choo,” Ping Wang muttered, as the palanquin passed out of sight, and Charlie and Fred knew that they had seen the murderer of their friend’s father, and the possessor of the treasure which they had come to China to secure.

The inn to which Ping Wang led his friends was the best in Kwang-ngan. It was roomy, fairly clean, and was the only place of its kind that was two stories high. The other inns had but one story.

Ping Wang took a room on the first floor, and they entered into occupation at once.

“Let us sit in the middle of the room,” Ping Wang said, “and then, if we talk very quietly, there will be no fear of any one hearing that we are not talking Chinese.”

Ping Wang then told his friends of what his cousin had said to him. They were very much relieved to hear that the missionaries had been warned of the danger that threatened them, but were rather worried by the difficulties before them.

“ The easiest way to get into Chin Choo’s garden,” Ping Wang said, “ will be by climbing over the wall. It is a high one, certainly, but I do not think that we shall have much difficulty in scaling it. What I do fear is, that as Chin Choo’s house is in the busiest part of the town, we may have to wait days, perhaps weeks, before we find the road deserted, even at night. As soon as it is dark, we will go out and find the most convenient spots for climbing. In the meanwhile, are either of you hungry? ”

Charlie and Fred had had such a hearty breakfast that they almost shuddered at the mention of food.

“ Well,” Ping Wang said, “ I’m not hungry either, but we shall want some dinner.”

He went down-stairs to give the order, and have a chat with the innkeeper. He was absent about twenty minutes, and when he returned the Pages saw that he had some news to tell them.

“ What is it? ” Charlie asked.

Ping Wang quietly turned the key in the door, and then sat down beside his friends.

“There is to be a feast to-night. It’s to be held at the other end of the town, and everybody who possibly can will be there. That will leave this end of the town nearly deserted. A better opportunity for climbing over Chin Choo’s wall we could not possibly have. The road will be deserted, and most of Chin Choo’s servants will be at the feast. Perhaps Chin Choo himself will be there. Don’t let us talk about it just now. Our dinner will not be brought up for three hours, and in the meantime we had better get all the sleep that we can. We must be as fresh as possible this evening.”

Charlie and Fred agreed, and five minutes later all three were sleeping soundly.

They were aroused from their slumber by a terrific banging at their door.

“Who’s there?” Ping Wang asked in Chinese, and the reply came, from the landlord himself, that he was their disreputable

nephew, who would, if permitted to intrude his worthless body upon their exalted presence, lay the dinner.

Ping Wang replied instantly that if their intellectual uncle would condescend to demean himself by waiting on such idiotic monkeys, they would at once admit his glorious body to their ridiculous and contemptible presence.

These flowery Chinese compliments having been exchanged, Ping Wang opened the door to his "uncle," and his "nephew" walked in and placed a couple of ducks on the table.

As soon as they had finished their meal, the Pages and Ping Wang went to the window and stood gazing down into the busy street. Charlie quickly noticed that nearly all the people who were proceeding in one direction were carrying provisions.

"Are they taking those things to give to their ancestors' ghosts?" he inquired.

"Well, no," Ping Wang replied. "The

feast to be given to-night has been got up by the priests of Fo."

"Who is Fo?"

"Buddha. Fo is our name for him. The Buddhists decided, many years ago, that the Confucians were to be blamed for neglecting to feast the ghosts of those who had been so unfortunate as to die without leaving any descendants, and agreed to do the work themselves. They published accounts of the terrible sufferings of the starving ghosts who had no descendants, and urged the people to contribute food to relieve their wants. The people gave willingly, and from that time the Buddhist priests have had feasts at intervals. I think that we shall be able to see part of this evening's performance. At dusk we will go out and examine the wall around Chin Choo's house, and when we have found the best place for scaling it, we will hurry off to the feast. We will stay there a short time, and then return to finish our job. By this time to-morrow I hope that

we shall be back at Su-ching, with our pockets full of rubies. But Chin Choo is not likely to be merciful to any one found robbing him."

"But we are not going to rob him," Charlie declared. "We are simply going to recover what he has stolen from you."

"That is so," said Fred, "but Chin Choo will think that as much stealing as if we were taking from him something to which he had a perfect right."

"Oh, well, don't let us look on the gloomy side of the affair," said Ping Wang. "We need not talk about it any more now. I must go out for a few minutes. Wait for me here."

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN Ping Wang returned, he locked the door and signed to his friends to come and sit in the middle of the room.

“ I have bought some offerings for us to make to the ghosts,” he said, and produced from his pocket a handful of pieces of colored paper.

“ It doesn’t look very satisfying food,” Charlie remarked, “ but I dare say that it is good enough for ghosts.”

“ This is not food,” Ping Wang replied — and, as he spoke, he took from the heap several round pieces of paper — “ it is money. Our ghosts, according to the belief of our wise men, lead a life, in some invisible world, which is very much like what they lived here; but, as they don’t appear to have a mint, we offer them money — this money.

To-night we shall have the pleasure of burning those pieces of round paper, which my countrymen believe pass in the form of money into the ghosts' possession as they disappear from our sight. We will not, however, confine our gifts to money. Here are houses, carts, wheelbarrows, horses, and suits of clothes, all made of paper, to be burnt. The ghosts, my countrymen think, will find them very useful."

Ping Wang was now in the humor for talking, and held his friends interested nearly the whole of the afternoon. Just before darkness came on they had some tea, and then paid the landlord and departed.

The people by now were flocking, or had already gone, to that part of the town where the feast was to be given, and consequently the Pages and Ping Wang found the track round the ten-foot wall of Chin Choo's house almost deserted. For this they were very thankful indeed, as it gave them a better opportunity for examining the wall.

"This will be the place," Ping Wang said, when they had gone about half-way round the wall. He pointed to several holes in it just large enough to insert the toes or fingers.

After taking note of the surroundings so that they would be able to find the spot again, they continued their journey until they reached the place from which they had started.

"Now for the feast," Ping Wang said, quietly, and they started off in the direction of the ghosts' feast. It was a merry, jovial crowd they joined. Most of the people were carrying provisions as well as offerings for the ghosts, and Ping Wang, not wishing that he and his friends should be conspicuous, purchased three legs of pork. Then they walked on again, but, before long, came to a large and excited crowd gathered round a poster on the outside wall of a joss-house or temple. Ping Wang, leaving the Pages in a dark corner, hurried forward to read

the placard, and, to his horror, found that his fears were realized. It was an anti-foreign poster, and the following is what he read:

“ We publicly announce that the foreigners who entered our Middle Kingdom many years ago have made plans to seize our territory. They ignore the teachings of Confucius, and have already taught the people their false religion, and have practised their sorceries upon them. Now the right-minded and superior men of our land are boiling with rage at the harm which the foreigners have done, and are determined to kill them. Every foreigner must be killed, and every house, shop, and church which they inhabit must be destroyed. Any one who shelters a foreigner will be killed, and all converts to the foreign religion who do not recant immediately will be executed. Kill the foreigners who are hoping to seize our country and introduce their barbarian customs! Kill the men who have made friends

with them! Kill the foreigners! Kill the foreigners!"

Ping Wang turned away. He knew that the placard would have the desired effect of rousing the people to a state of frenzy. Already hundreds of people were shouting, "Kill the foreigners!"

The cry was, by this time, familiar to Charlie and Fred, and there was no need for them to ask Ping Wang what was printed on the poster.

By a slight movement of his head, Ping Wang signed to the Pages to follow him. He walked a few yards down the crowded street, fearing every moment that his friends would be detected by the mob and killed before his eyes, and then turned into a narrow lane, dark and almost deserted. The people had evidently flocked into the main road. He sighed with thankfulness, and, having glanced round and seen that the Pages were following, he quickened his speed. It was some years since he had traversed the by-

streets of his native town, but they were not changed to any great extent, and he had no difficulty in finding his way. He led his friends through street after street — gloomy and squalid places, but happily deserted by the residents. At last they came into a main road which led to the town gates; not the ones at which they had entered early that morning, but those on the other side. He could see them in the distance. They were open, and he was tempted to lead his friends straight out into the country, and away from the danger which threatened them. At any rate, it seemed to him that he would be doing an unfriendly action if he did not tell them that escape was still easy.

“ There are the gates,” he said, in an undertone. “ Shall we go out and hurry off to Barton? ”

“ No,” Charlie said, firmly; “ not until we have got your treasure.”

“ But do you know what was on that poster? ”

"We have a very good idea, I fancy. An order to kill the foreigners, was it not?"

"Yes. Shall we escape?"

"No. Hurry on to Chin Choo's."

Ping Wang again led them through narrow, dirty streets until they caught sight of Chin Choo's house. When they were about fifty yards from it, they saw the gates thrown open and the mandarin's palanquin borne out. From the shouts of the man with the whip who ran ahead of it, they knew that Chin Choo was inside.

"That is good," Ping Wang whispered. "Now that Chin Choo is out, the servants will start gambling and smoking opium. We need not fear being disturbed by them."

In less than five minutes they arrived at the spot where they had decided to start their undertaking. They looked up and down the road, and, seeing no one about, Ping Wang climbed the wall.

"It is very easy," he said, when he

reached the top; "the drop on the other side is only about six feet."

He disappeared into Chin Choo's grounds and Fred at once scaled the wall. Charlie was about to follow him, and had already climbed five or six feet from the ground, when he heard some one approaching, and, before he was able to decide whether to jump down or continue climbing, his left foot was seized and tugged so viciously that he came down with a rush on top of his assailant.

In an instant he was on his feet again, ready to defend himself from any further attack. Looking down at the person on whom he had fallen, he saw, to his astonishment, that it was the cart-woman who had caused him so much annoyance before.

She lay glaring at Charlie, speechless and panting. But he had barely recognized her when he heard a shout of "Foreigners!" and looking round saw the woman's husband running at him. He jumped quickly aside, and to defend himself snatched up one

of the legs of pork which had been left on the ground.

He rushed at the Chinaman, who, being a great coward, immediately turned about and fled. But Charlie was upon him in a moment, and with the leg of pork dealt him a blow on the back of the head, which sent him sprawling on the ground. A knife fell from his hand, and Charlie at once seized it. The woman, seeing what had befallen her husband, scrambled to her feet and toddled to him, shouting, "Foreigners!" as she went. To prevent her being heard Charlie clapped his hand over her mouth, and, in spite of her biting it, kept it there.

Meanwhile Ping Wang and Fred had scrambled back, hearing the noise. They joined Charlie, and between them managed to tie the Chinaman's pigtail round the woman's neck, so that neither could move without difficulty.

"Now let us leave them," Ping Wang said, and they started running. But before

they had gone many yards they heard the Chinaman and his wife shouting frantically, "Foreigners! Kill the foreigners!"

Their shouts were heard by others, also, and a man rushed forward to stop them, but Charlie raised his knife threateningly, and the fellow ran. Nevertheless, he, too, shouted, "Foreigners!" and, gathering together some friends, started in pursuit. At every few yards others joined in the chase.

"Where are you going to take us?" Charlie asked of Ping Wang, after glancing back at the mob pursuing them.

"To the gates," Ping Wang answered. "This is our way."

They turned into one of the narrow streets which they had traversed earlier in the evening, and, as they ran at full speed along it, here and there men came out of their houses to see what the noise meant. They heard the shouts of "Foreigners!" but the average Chinaman has a great respect for his skin, and consequently not one of the men who

saw the Pages and Ping Wang rush by attempted to stop them.

“ I’m done up,” Ping Wang gasped before long; “ our only chance is to hide.”

The next street was a short one, and the Pages were surprised after what Ping Wang had said about being tired to see him sprint along it. They followed close on his heels, and when he stopped at the end of it, they did the same. Instead of crossing the wide road which faced them, Ping Wang turned to the right, and after walking quickly for about thirty yards made another turn to the right, which brought them into a narrow street running parallel with the one down which they had sprinted. There was no one visible; all the residents were evidently at the feast. Ping Wang stopped at the second house and pressed his hand against the door, which opened. He peeped into the place, and, seeing no one, entered stealthily, the Pages following quickly and equally cautiously. As soon as they were in, Ping Wang shot the

bolt of the door. It was a dark and dirty room in which the fugitives found themselves, and by the faint light of a lantern they could see that it was a poverty-stricken place.

CHAPTER XX.

IN the room which the fugitives now found themselves, there were several garments hanging.

“Let us change our clothes,” Charlie whispered; “it will be a splendid disguise.”

Ping Wang’s face beamed. He pulled off his coat and trousers and donned in their place a dirty jacket and a pair of ragged knickerbockers. Then, taking off his “beehive,” he wound round his head the yellow scarf of the Boxers.

Charlie and Fred hastened to follow his example. Ping Wang tied their Boxer cloths round their heads, and then looked at them with interest.

“Splendid,” he declared, “and now we must be off in case any of the people return.

They have gone," he added, after listening for a few minutes.

He opened the door. A passer-by spoke to him, and he answered cheerfully, making some remark which caused the man to laugh heartily as he continued his journey.

"Come on," Ping Wang whispered, when the man had passed out of sight, and stepped into the street, followed by Charlie and Fred.

No one penetrated their disguise as they hurried along the streets. One man informed Ping Wang that the three foreigners had been killed. They had taken refuge in a house and the mob had thereupon set light to it. He pointed to the distant flames. Ping Wang was sorry for the men who had been mistaken for them, if they were really in the burnt house, but could not help feeling relieved at the thought that now the mob had wreaked its vengeance it would probably disperse for the night.

"When we turn the next corner we shall

be facing the gates," Ping Wang said, after a short walk; and Charlie and Fred heard the news with thankfulness. They were as determined as ever to recover their friend's wealth before quitting China, but they realized that it would be folly to make another attempt to do so while the Boxers were stirring up the people. Their idea was to return to Hongkong and remain there until the anti-foreign feeling had grown less strong.

Ping Wang was the first to reach the corner. To the astonishment of his friends he stopped short, with an exclamation of surprise. Charlie and Fred were at his side in a moment and saw at once the cause of his astonishment — the town gates were closed!

The surprise which they showed on seeing that the gates were closed did not cause any comment or notice among the people standing near, for they too had been surprised and annoyed by the same thing. Chin Choo had given the order for the gates to be shut, and

the soldiers dared not open them until they received from him a command to that effect.

After a time the crowd began to disperse, some of the people wandering off to find lodgings for the night, and others sitting down by the roadside in the hope that, before long, the gates would be thrown open. Among the latter were the Pages and Ping Wang. They found a dark corner, and sat there almost entirely hidden from passers-by. Ping Wang sat in front of his friends, so that if any one did peer into their corner he would see him, and conclude that his companions were Chinamen. A long silence was at last broken by the shouts of an advancing mob.

“They’ve discovered their mistake,” Charlie declared, “and are continuing the search for us.”

“Don’t talk,” Ping Wang said, and once more they became silent, listening eagerly to distinguish what the mob was shouting. In a few minutes their suspicions were con-

firmed, for the cry which burst from hundreds of throats was one that there was no need for Ping Wang to translate — Charlie and Fred understood only too well what it meant.

“ Kill the foreigners! ” Nearer each moment came the crowd, every man uttering the same cry. Soon it came in sight. At the head of the mob was Chin Choo in his palanquin, wearing the yellow head-cloth of the Boxers.

“ They’re Boxers,” Ping Wang whispered, “ and evidently they have no idea that we are alive.”

This was welcome news to Charlie and Fred, and remembering that they too were members of the Boxers’ Society, they watched the crowd with great interest. Every Boxer wore his yellow head-cloth, and carried a weapon of some sort. A few only had rifles, the remainder being armed with swords, knives, bows and arrows, and sticks.

When the Boxers had arrived at the town gates, Chin Choo addressed his followers from his palanquin. He declared that the foreigners had come to the Middle Kingdom for the sole purpose of taking their country, and that, therefore, it was necessary to kill them all at once. If any were permitted to escape, they would return to their own land, and come back with many more. Then he declared that the Boxers would avenge all the cruelties which he said had been enacted by the foreigners, and finished up with the statement that the Boxers could not be wounded. Bullets would glide off their skin without making a scar, and swords, spears, and knives would make no impression.

Chin Choo saw that the people had doubts about the truth of his last assertion, and beckoned two of his officers to approach him. He talked with them for a few moments, and then declared, in a loud voice, "Now you shall see that nothing can harm the men who wear yellow head-cloths."

As he spoke six Boxers advanced, and stood with their backs to the town gates. Then twelve of the soldiers marched forward with their rifles at the trail, and halted about twenty yards in front of them. At the word of command they loaded their rifles and raised them to their shoulders. An instant later they fired a volley at the six Boxers, but, to the astonishment of the on-lookers, not one of the men was injured.

"They used blank cartridges," Fred declared.

"It was smart of Chin Choo," Charlie declared, and Fred and Ping Wang agreed with him, for not one Chinaman in a thousand knows that there are such things as blank cartridges.

The crowd was delighted with this miracle, and the Boxers themselves became wild with joy. They waved their weapons about, and shouted to be led against the enemy at once. Their desire was granted, the gates were

thrown open, and the Boxers marched out of the town.

"Come on," Ping Wang said, when the Boxers began to move forward. "We will march out with them."

They slipped into the road, and joined the tail of the Boxers boldly, brandishing the knives that they had with them in imitation of the Chinamen's actions. Ping Wang shouted as loudly as any man, and shook his fist fiercely at an imaginary enemy.

"Keep your eye on me," he whispered to Charlie when they had marched about a mile. "We will bolt soon."

Charlie saw that it would not be a difficult thing to escape from the rabble army, for men straggled away right and left, just as they felt inclined. The officers walked in front, and beyond looking round occasionally to see that the mob was following, kept no further watch on them.

Before long Ping Wang halted to rearrange his head-cloth. Charlie and Fred

turned, and stood looking at him, as if they were waiting for him to finish and march on. Their action was very natural, and the few men who had been marching behind them passed on without a remark.

Ping Wang continued to fumble about with his head-cloth until the last of the Boxers were out of sight. Then he said, "Now's our time," and quitted the track. The bushes, which grew thickly along the roadside, afforded ample "cover" if they needed it.

"We must hurry through this undergrowth without being seen, and get well ahead of the Boxers," said Ping Wang; "then we will rejoin the track and run forward at full speed."

They proceeded cautiously, but travelled quick enough to gain on the Boxers.

"We are about level with the middle of the mob," Ping Wang declared some minutes later. "We must get a good half-mile ahead of them before we rejoin the track."

As Ping Wang finished speaking, Fred, who had looked behind him, exclaimed anxiously, "There's some one following us."

Charlie and Ping Wang stopped short, and, looking in the direction indicated by Fred, saw a dark figure struggling through the bushes after them.

"Let us wait and tackle him," Charlie suggested, but Ping Wang objected firmly to that proposal.

"There may be other fellows following him," he added, "and a shout from any one of them would bring the mob rushing over here in a moment. The best thing that we can do is to hurry on as quickly as possible."

"Come along, then," Charlie said, and started running. They ran a little more than a mile. They soon left the Boxers behind, but the man whom they were trying to avoid still pursued them.

"He has gained on us," Charlie declared, and Fred and Ping Wang could not deny it.

“ We must run faster,” Ping Wang said, but, as he was panting for breath, Charlie and Fred felt sure that they would not get rid of their pursuer by running.

“ He is alone,” Fred declared; “ let’s stop and see what he wants. We may be certain that he hasn’t any firearms with him, for if he had he would have had a shot at us long before this.”

Ping Wang, however, did not agree; he preferred to keep on running. But he sadly over-rated his running powers, and before they had gone another hundred yards he had to stop and gasp for breath. The pursuer was now approaching them rapidly, so Charlie and Fred grasped their knives and waited for him. He increased his speed, and, as he drew nearer, they saw that he was wearing the yellow head-cloth of the Boxers.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHEN the man was within twenty yards of the fugitives, he caught sight of their knives, and, stopping suddenly, exclaimed in pidgin English:

“What for knives? my plenty good Clistian man. My no knives, no shootee gun, no nothin’.”

As he spoke, he held up his hands to show that he was unarmed, and, with perfect confidence in their honor, advanced in that fashion.

“Who are you?” Charlie asked, as the thin, wizened, but lively little Chinaman stood before them.

“Number One cook. Welly good cook for missionally man.”

“What for wantee catchee us?” Fred inquired.

“Englisheeman takee to missionally.”

“How you savvy we Englisheeman?”

“Englisheeman pigtail plenty good,” Number One cook explained, but added the unflattering information that “Englisheeman no can hide welly much funny nose, welly much funny eyes, welly much funny mouth.”

Ping Wang, having recovered his breath, took up the conversation, Charlie and Fred meanwhile keeping a sharp lookout for Boxers. When they had walked quickly about a quarter of a mile, Ping Wang brought his conversation in Chinese to a close.

“This man says,” he informed the Pages, “that he is employed at the mission station for which we are bound. He had been sent up-country by the missionaries on business, and was returning through Kwang-ngan when he saw the anti-foreign placard. He did the same thing as we did — hurried to the gates — but did not reach them until after they were closed. Being hungry, he

went back to get some food, and on his way to the shop he met a sleepy Boxer, who had apparently just come from an opium den. Number One said to himself, 'I will have that head-cloth,' and he took it, giving the Boxer his own hat instead. Then, after awhile, he made his way to the gates, arriving there just as the Boxers were marching out. He declares that he knew that both of you were Englishmen the moment he saw you. He kept his eyes on us, and decided to join us."

"Does he think that the rising will spread?" Charlie asked.

"He is sure it will, and he means to urge Barton and his friends to leave the country as quickly as possible."

Being now about half a mile ahead of the Boxers, the two Englishmen and the two Chinamen made their way back to the track, and, after walking quickly for another hour, arrived at the gates of Su-ching, which they had hoped not to reënter until they had

brought with them Ping Wang's treasure. The gates were open, but the soldiers who guarded the entrance to the town had thrown off their usual air of apathy, and were questioning eagerly every man who came from the direction of Kwang-ngan. On seeing four Boxers approaching, they hurried forward to meet them.

"Are the Boxers coming quickly to kill the foreigners?" they asked, excitedly.

"They are," Ping Wang answered. "Listen and you will hear them shouting."

The noise of the advancing mob reached them as a faint, buzzing sound, but loud enough to convince the soldiers that the Boxers were really coming. They were anxious to ask Ping Wang and his companions more questions, but Ping Wang cut short their questions.

"We bear a message," he declared, "and we must deliver it at once. We have run quickly, for we did not carry rifles. But

now that we have finished running, give us rifles, in case we meet any foreigners."

To the soldiers this request appeared to be a perfectly reasonable one, and, knowing that the mandarin and other town officials sympathized with the Boxers, they took from the armory, which was close by, four Snider rifles, and handed them out to Ping Wang, with ammunition.

Feeling safe once more, Ping Wang and his friends hurried off in the direction of the mandarin's house; but, as soon as they got out of sight of the soldiers, Number One exclaimed, "This way welly much more quick," and turned up a narrow side street. The Pages and Ping Wang followed him, and in about three minutes they arrived at the wall of the mission station, which they saw was already placarded with anti-foreign manifestoes. They rang the bell, but some minutes passed, and the gate was not opened. They rang again, loudly, and a

minute later they heard Barton inquire, in Chinese, who they were.

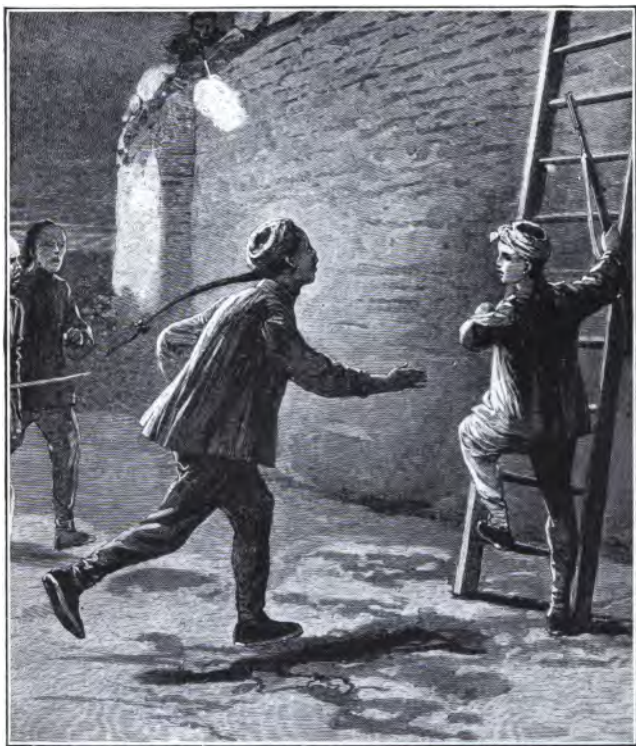
“Missionallies,” Number One answered, quite convinced that Charlie and Fred were missionaries.

“Where from?” Barton asked, for one of his native servants had already turned traitor, and he was now very cautious.

“It’s all right, Mr. Barton!” Charlie sang out. “We are the Pages, Ping Wang, and your Number One cook.”

“That’s splendid!” Barton declared, and, although they could not see him, they knew by his voice that their arrival was welcome. “Wait a moment,” he continued; “the gate is barricaded, but I will lower a ladder to you. Here you are!” he called down a minute later, and on looking up they saw him lowering from the top of the wall a long bamboo ladder. When it touched the ground they planted it firmly.

“You go first, Number One,” Charlie



**"AS CHARLEY PLANTED HIS FOOT ON THE LOWEST
RUNG, THREE MEN CAME RUNNING UP."**

**THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY**

**ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS**

R

L

said, in a tone that showed he meant to be obeyed.

“Welly good,” Number One replied, and went up the ladder as nimbly as if it were his usual way of entering the mission station.

Fred followed Number One, and Charlie asked to be the last, but Ping Wang objected.

“Hurry up!” Barton sang out, and Ping Wang, seeing that Charlie was determined to be the last man up, climbed the ladder. Just as he reached the top, and as Charlie planted his foot on the lowest rung, three men, with knives in their hands, came running up, and Charlie was unaware of his danger; but Fred saw the scoundrels, and slipping a cartridge into the breech of his rifle he took aim, fired, and shot the foremost man. The other two, who had not expected any danger, turned about and fled in terror.

“Fred,” Charlie said, when he had

climbed over the wall, "you saved my life." Then he turned to Barton. "I see that you are prepared for the Boxers," he said. "We were afraid that we shouldn't get here in time to warn you of their approach."

"Are they on their way, then?"

"They will be here in ten minutes at the latest."

Barton sighed. "I had been hoping," he said, "that the Empress-Dowager would have had the Boxers suppressed before they would be able to reach here. I am afraid, however, that she is secretly encouraging them. It is a great sorrow to my colleagues and myself to find ourselves arming against the people among whom we have lived on friendly terms for some years. However, we must protect our women and children. Since you left us, eight men, five women, and four children have joined us. Some of them have suffered terribly in their flight from the Boxers. Their own mission stations have been destroyed, and many of their fellow

missionaries were murdered. Consequently we may have to fight."

"How many European men have you, and what weapons?" Fred asked.

"Thirteen, counting you and your brother, and we have eight rifles and five revolvers. That is not including your Sniders."

"But what about provisions?" Charlie asked.

"I have got a good stock, and I think we can stand a month's siege. Of course, it won't last quite so long now you are here."

The other missionaries now joined them, in answer to Barton's summons. The majority were young men, but two were middle-aged, and one a gray-bearded old gentleman. Each had his rifle or revolver, and, although they did not wish to be forced to fight, they had the determined looks of men who knew that their cause was a good one, and were prepared to die in its defence. Their positions at the wall had been settled some hours before, but the arrival of the

Pages, Ping Wang, and Number One made fresh arrangement necessary.

"I will post you above the gate, with Ping Wang and Number One, as you call him," Barton said to Fred, adding, "I will make Charlie my lieutenant."

"That won't do," Charlie declared. "I know nothing about military matters, but Fred does. He's a Volunteer, and a jolly good shot into the bargain. Make him your lieutenant."

"Very well. Then you go over the gate."

Charlie took up his position on a platform built over the gateway, on the inner side of the wall. Ping Wang was on his right, and Number One on his left.

"I came to the conclusion," Barton said, as he showed Fred the defences, "that it would be risky to make loopholes in the wall, in case, after a time, we should be unable to place a man at each. Therefore we built those platforms."

The platforms were built at intervals around the wall, each having room for six or seven men. The defenders would have to shoot over the top of the wall, but cover had been provided for them by sandbags fixed securely along the ridge.

“ Our women workers made those sandbags,” Barton remarked. “ They used table-cloths, rugs, curtains, and even some of their own dresses. They have been a great help to us.”

“ By the bye, do your colleagues know how to handle their rifles? ” Fred inquired.

“ Mr. Wilkins, that old gentleman with the gray beard, was a good shot forty years ago; but from the time he first left England, until yesterday, he hadn’t touched a rifle. However, he was practising yesterday and to-day, and I have no doubt that he will do well. My other colleagues had never handled a rifle in their lives until this morning, when I gave them a little instruction.

I was a member of the Oxford University Corps."

"We ought to make a good defence, then," said Fred. "But we must keep a sharp eye on the ammunition, and see that it isn't wasted."

"That reminds me that my man got a fine Lee-Metford and a large box of ammunition. They were sold to him at a low price by a boatman who, I suspect, had stolen them at one of the treaty ports. As the rifle was strange to me I held it back until I had time to learn how to fill the magazine. Would you like to have it? "

"I should, very much."

They hurried to the veranda of the house where the Lee-Metford and ammunition lay. Fred picked up the rifle and, after examining it closely, recognized it as the very one which he had used with good effect against the river pirates. He was about to tell Barton of his discovery when loud shouts from the town made known to them that the Box-

ers had arrived. Fred pulled off his skull-cap, filled it with cartridges, and followed Barton down the steps and up on to the platform, where Charlie, Ping Wang, and Number One were stationed.

CHAPTER XXII.

“ HERE they come,” Ping Wang said, and as he spoke a shouting, wild-looking mob of Chinamen came running down the road to the mission station. Halting about twenty yards away from the mission wall, they waited until their whole force had arrived, contenting themselves in the meanwhile with yelling, “ Down with the foreigners! ” brandishing their weapons and waving their flags. Soon there were quite three hundred Boxers in the road facing the front of the mission, it being their hope to strike terror by a display of their numbers.

At a signal from the leader of the Boxers, about fifty rifles were fired pointblank at the wall. Fred raised his rifle, pressed the trigger, and the Boxer leader threw up his arms and fell on his face. Fred’s shot was taken

by the other defenders as the signal to fire, and they did so promptly.

The surprise and terror of the Boxers on discovering that they were not invulnerable formed a sight which none of the defenders will ever forget. Every man was seized with a desire to escape from the foreigners' bullets, and they turned and ran in confusion.

"Cease fire," Barton commanded, when he saw the enemy routed, and Fred, Charlie, and Ping Wang obeyed instantly.

"I don't fancy that the Boxers will trouble us again to-night," Barton said, a few minutes later, "for their leaders will have some difficulty after this in convincing them that they cannot be wounded. There is no need for all of us to remain on duty. I dare say you fellows are hungry; come inside."

"We are not presentable," Fred said.

"Just look at the rags we are wearing."

"They are pretty bad," Barton admitted.

"Come into my room, and I'll see if I can't find you some better ones."

Barton went into the rooms of two other missionaries, and returned with an armful of clothes. "Now I will go and see about a meal for you," he said. "I will be back in a few minutes."

When he returned, he could not help smiling at what he saw. Ping Wang, wishing to dress like his friends, had put on knickerbockers and a college blazer, down the back of which hung his black, silky pigtail. Charlie was wearing flannel trousers and a khaki tunic, while Fred was attired in a black and somewhat moth-eaten suit, which was too short for him both in arms and legs.

"You look better than you did," Barton declared. "But, now, come and have your supper."

He led the way along the veranda, and into a large, airy room at the back of the building, where the supper was laid. Four ladies were hard at work making sandbags, a task at which they had been busy since early in the morning. Barton introduced the Pages

and Ping Wang to them. In spite of the anxiety which the fact of the mission being besieged caused them, they were cheerful in their conversation, and insisted upon the newcomers making a hearty meal. After supper Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang returned to their posts, relieving the missionaries, and enabling them to have some rest.

The night was very cold, and the sentinels had great difficulty in keeping themselves warm.

"I hope," Fred said to Charlie, "that the Boxers won't attack us while my hands are numbed, for I'm sure I could not shoot just now."

"It's my opinion," Charlie answered, "that the reception we gave them has taken the pluck out of them, and that we sha'n't be troubled with them for some days. Then, perhaps, they will screw up their courage to make another assault."

"Their silence strikes me as very sus-

picious," Ping Wang declared. "It's my belief that they are planning a surprise."

Ping Wang's opinion was at once communicated to Barton, with the result that every man on duty was instructed to keep an extra sharp lookout. The order was, as a matter of fact, not needed; for the sentries were as alert as they possibly could be. Hour after hour they peered into the darkness, but without seeing any signs of the enemy.

At daybreak Number One and his assistant cooks brought breakfast to the shivering defenders. They enjoyed their breakfast thoroughly, and thanked Number One for its excellence. He smiled, and sent his assistants away with the crockery. He himself remained, without asking permission, upon the platform. A spare rifle was there, and he took possession of it. Barton was about to send him back to the kitchen when Charlie suddenly exclaimed, "What's that, just over there?"

"It looks to me uncommonly like an over-

turned wheelbarrow," Barton replied. " We shall know when it gets a little lighter."

" It is a wheelbarrow," Fred declared, a few minutes later.

" Well," Charlie exclaimed, " this is the first time that I have heard of a man coming into battle on a wheelbarrow! "

" I can see what it was used for!" Fred exclaimed. " It carried the ammunition. I can see the cartridges lying on the ground. We must have those. I will go down and get them. Where's the ladder? "

" We certainly need more ammunition," Barton admitted, " but it would be a dangerous job for you to get those cartridges."

" I object, too," said Charlie. " It would be madness to run the risk of losing our best shot. I will go and get the cartridges, and, with Mr. Wilkins and you two to keep off any one who approaches me, I shall be pretty safe."

" Charlie's plan is the better of the two," Ping Wang joined in; " but he mustn't at-

tempt to carry it out without help. If he has one or two men with him the Boxers will be less likely to attack him, and certainly the job will be done more quickly. I'll be one of the men to accompany him, and I should like Number One to be the other."

Ping Wang asked Number One in Chinese if he would care to take part in fetching the ammunition. His face beamed at the idea.

"Get the ladder, then," Barton said; and Charlie added, "Bring a sack."

Number One fetched both at once. The sack was thrown down into the road, and the ladder lowered quickly.

Charlie was the first to descend, but his companions followed so quickly that all three were on the ladder at the same time. Snatching up the sack the moment that he touched the ground, Charlie ran to the overturned wheelbarrow. Ping Wang and Number One were only a yard or two behind him, and soon all three were scooping up handfuls of cartridges and dropping them into the sack.

"Guns, mistah," Number One exclaimed, when the sack was about half-full, and pointed to three rifles lying near.

"Pick them up," Charlie said, "and run back with them at once."

"Can do," Number One replied, and, collecting the rifles, ran back to the ladder, climbed up it, and handed his prize over the wall to Barton. Then, running to the barrow, he resumed his work of picking up cartridges.

"We needn't trouble about the others," Charlie said when they had collected all but about thirty, which were scattered over a wide space, and, slinging the sack over his shoulder, he started for the ladder. At the same moment four shots were fired at him from the houses facing the mission, but without touching him or his companions. Mr. Wilkins, Barton, and Fred returned the fire instantly, but their opponents were hidden from view, and their shots were wasted—at least, they imagined that they were

wasted; but it was a very fortunate thing for them that they had not touched a Boxer, for the fanatics no sooner found that they were unhurt by the foreigners' fire than they jumped to the conclusion again that they could not be wounded. One of them, springing up from his place of hiding on the roof, tried a standing shot at Charlie, but, before he had time to fire, Mr. Wilkins's rifle rang out, and the Boxer fell forward into the street. His death was not witnessed by the other Boxers, for they were in a different house. One of them exposed his head for a moment, and Barton and Fred fired simultaneously, and one, or perhaps both, hit it. But the other Boxers kept under cover, and one of them shot Number One through the left arm.

Ping Wang and Number One climbed the ladder in safety, but Charlie, whose progress was hampered by the sack, had not reached the foot of it.

"Drop the sack and run!" Fred shouted,

but his brother either did not hear or would not take his advice.

“Run, Charlie! Never mind about the sack,” Fred again shouted, but Charlie was now close to the foot of the ladder, and had no intention of losing his prize. A bullet tore up the ground a yard in front of him, and Fred, in desperation, fired the contents of his magazine at the spot where the man was hidden. The rapidity of the firing apparently frightened him, and Barton having wounded the other man, Charlie climbed the ladder without further harm; but just as he reached the safe side of the wall, a crowd of fully one hundred Boxers rushed round the corner, and began a determined attack on the mission.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE Boxers had evidently heard that Charlie and the two Chinamen had ventured to leave the shelter of the mission enclosure, and it was plain that they had hoped to surprise them. And had they been a minute earlier, they would undoubtedly have succeeded in doing so. In fact, the foremost man was so close upon them that he seized the ladder just as it was being raised, and, tugging hard, pulled it out of Barton's hands. This capture, trivial though it was, filled the Boxers with enthusiasm. With fierce shouts they rushed at the gates and attacked them with hatchets. But, as the gates were of iron, and had been made and fixed with the intention of resisting such assaults, their efforts were in vain. Soon they recognized that they were wasting their strength, and,

at a signal from their leader, they turned away and ran to seek shelter. Soon there was not a living Boxer visible to the missionaries and their friends.

They had had enough fighting for one day, and did not again expose themselves. The besieged party took the opportunity to strengthen their defences and make other preparations for a long siege.

"I hope," Barton said, in answer to a question from Charlie, "that we shall be relieved within a week from to-day, as the missionaries who had to seek shelter here sent trustworthy messengers to Peking and Wei-hai-wei with letters to the British officials, telling them of their sufferings and whither they were bound; and the day before you arrived I sent off two messengers with notes for the captain of any British warship they could find, stating that we were besieged."

About ten o'clock on the following morning the Boxers renewed their attack, but in

a manner which the defenders had not expected. Instead of rushing into the open, as they had done before, they fired from the houses facing the mission building.

"Get the women and children into the basement at once," Barton shouted to one of his colleagues, for some of the Boxers were firing from the roofs of the houses into the mission enclosure.

"The Boxers take good care to keep under cover," Charlie remarked. "Evidently we have taught them to respect us."

"They won't remain concealed for many hours," said Ping Wang. "When they get excited they will make another attack on the gate."

His words came true. For nearly one hour the Boxers continued to fire upon the missionaries' house, doing severe damage to it. Their success elated them, and the fact that the besieged did not reply to the attack probably made them believe that they had used up all their ammunition. At any rate,

they suddenly rushed out of the houses and made for the mission gate, waving flags and shouting wildly. Fred and Barton, at some newly made loopholes, and Charlie, Mr. Wilkins, and Ping Wang at their former positions, fired rapidly at the advancing mob, which, with loud shouts and wild gestures, rushed at the gate to make another attempt to destroy it. But the gate resisted all their efforts.

"Oh, for a Maxim!" Charlie sighed.
"That would disperse them."

"So would boiling water," Mr. Wilkins remarked, "but we can't spare it. I wonder —"

What Mr. Wilkins intended to say was never known, for at that moment Number One who was stationed, revolver in hand, some yards away, hailed them excitedly: "Lun, lun!" he shouted; "Boxer man climbee up ladder plenty quick."

Charlie and Mr. Wilkins looked out from among the sand-bags, and saw that the Boxers

had placed two ladders a foot or two to the left of where Number One was posted. As the defenders looked out, some who had remained under cover fired at them. Charlie drew back instantly, for a bullet passed within an inch of his head, and, hurrying down from his platform, ran to the spot where the Boxers hoped to scale the wall. One of them was already on it. He dropped from the wall into the mission enclosure, and rushed with wild shouts at Number One, who fired but failed to hit him. But Charlie was close at hand, and, when the Boxer was about ten yards from Number One, he pressed the trigger of his rifle, and the daring fanatic fell. But four more Boxers had dropped into the enclosure, and, not daunted by the fate of their comrade, were rushing at Charlie and Number One. The latter fired his revolver, and, to his great surprise, shot the foremost Boxer in the left leg. Almost at the same moment Charlie put another out of the fight, but, before he could

reload, the third Boxer was close upon him. Dropping the cartridge, Charlie grasped his rifle in both hands near the muzzle, and, swinging it over his shoulder, brought the butt down on his assailant's head. The fourth man, seeing the fate of his comrades, tried to escape, but his efforts were fruitless.

"Tell him to surrender," Charlie said to Number One.

Number One did so, and the Boxer at once went down on his knees, and, bending forward, placed his forehead and the palms of his hands on the ground.

"Get some rope and bind him securely," Charlie instructed Number One, who obeyed at once.

Several other Boxers had been sitting on top of the wall, watching the fight, and, when they saw that their comrades were getting the worst of it, instead of going to their help, they retired quickly to join the mob, which, however, had once more taken to flight. The gallant little band of defenders

were, naturally, very pleased at their victory, which, alas! they soon discovered was very dearly bought. To their great grief, the veteran missionary, Mr. Wilkins, had been shot through the throat and was dead. Evidently the fatal wound had been received when he looked out to see if the Boxers really were climbing the wall. He was buried at sunset in a corner of the mission enclosure, and his death cast a gloom over the defenders.

Two weeks passed away, and there was still no news of the long-expected relief. Food was so scarce that it was indeed wonderful how the besieged managed to exist. Four of them had died, and were now lying in the little cemetery in the corner of the enclosure. Others were seriously ill, and it was feared that, unless relief came speedily, they, too, would soon succumb.

The Boxers had altered their plans on finding that they could not carry the mission buildings by assault, and now relied upon

starving out the defenders. By day or by night scarcely a single Boxer was to be seen, although hundreds were within a stone's throw. Every building that could be seen from the mission had a Boxer flag planted on it, and every house facing it had been fortified. From these houses the Boxers, day and night, fired on the mission, the residential part of which, except the basement, was in a ruined condition. To cross from the platforms to the mission house was a work of danger, for some trained Chinese soldiers, who had joined the Boxers, were by no means bad shots, and, as they could look down into the enclosure, they fired every time that one of the defenders was seen. They used a large amount of ammunition, but without drawing the fire of the missionaries and their friends.

Another week passed — the most disastrous that the besieged had gone through. Two more of them had died from fatigue, fever, and want of proper food. The mule

which had drawn the missionaries' trap for some years, had been killed and skinned, and in the course of two or three days the last of it would be eaten. When that was gone there would not be an atom of food left. If it had not been for the women and children, the men would have made a sortie and died facing overwhelming odds.

"We must remain where we are for their sake," Barton declared, and the rest agreed with him. Then they discussed how to make the remainder of the mule-flesh last a day or two longer than they hoped; but they were already on such short rations that it was almost impossible to reduce them.

"What's that?" Charlie exclaimed, suddenly. "Didn't you hear anything?"

"Only those two shots which the Boxers fired," Fred replied.

"No, not that. I thought I heard a cheer."

"Imagination, I'm afraid," Barton said, sorrowfully, but he had scarcely uttered the

words when the sound of firing in the distance was heard distinctly.

“Relief!” Charlie declared, excitedly. “I’m certain it was an English cheer which I heard.”

“The firing is outside the town,” Ping Wang remarked, “and the Boxers have heard it. Look, they’re leaving their shelter.”

The sound of the firing had evidently caused the greatest excitement among the Boxers. They streamed out of the houses and ran off in the direction of the gates through which the advancing force, whether friend or foe, would have to enter the town.

The sound of firing in the distance now became louder, and it was plain that a fierce fight was raging somewhere near the town gates. Soon they knew that the force attacking the town was winning, for several terror-stricken Chinamen rushed past the mission, seeking some place in which to hide.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THREE-QUARTERS of an hour after the first sound of firing was heard by Charlie and his friends, a loud, unmistakably British cheer rang through the air.

"They've entered the town," Fred exclaimed, and cheered wildly. Every Englishman, and Ping Wang also, joined in the cheer. Then they fell into silence, listening to the distant sounds. The Boxers were yelling furiously, hoping to terrify the Englishmen who had entered the town.

"They're marching straight through the town," one of the missionaries declared anxiously. "Perhaps they don't know that we are here."

"They are certain to be aware of that," Barton answered. "No doubt they are going to secure the other gate."

"My cally message to Number One soldier man," Number One suggested. "Say Clistian missionallies big piecee hungly."

"But the Boxers might kill you," Barton hinted.

"Boxer man nebber killee me. My plenty clebber. Boxer man nebber catchee me."

"All right, then; you may go."

Number One grinned with delight, and, when the bamboo ladder had been lowered over the wall, went off at a run.

Charlie, Fred, and their friends found the time pass very slowly. They could hear that the English were fighting their way steadily through the town, and every minute their anxiety to see their gallant countrymen increased. Presently a loud British cheer told them that the other gate had been captured. The firing now became less frequent, and in about ten minutes it ceased entirely.

The excitement in the mission enclosure was now intense. The surviving women and children came out of the basement where

they had been prisoners for more than three weeks, and climbed up on the platforms to get the first view of their deliverers. The native Christians, who had borne the hardships of the siege uncomplainingly, chatted and laughed gaily. The sick and wounded lay in the little hospital with their eyes fixed on the door.

“ They’re coming! ” Charlie shouted a few minutes later, and the good news thrilled both Englishmen and Chinamen.

The tramp of drilled men came nearer and nearer, and soon from out of the street, almost facing the mission buildings, marched a British naval officer. He gave a swift glance along the wall, and seeing the men and women peering through the sand-bags, he saluted them with his sword. They answered him with a cheer, and instantly some fifty smiling, sunburnt tars burst into a loud “ Hip, hip, hoorah! ”

With the smartness characteristic of our navy the men were formed up in a line with

their backs to the mission wall. The officer in command gave one look at them, and then almost ran up the ladder which Barton had lowered.

"It is!" Charlie exclaimed, delightedly, as the officer reached the top of the ladder. "It's our old friend Williams."

"So it is," Fred declared, as he recognized the officer of the revenue cutter, who had captured the coper in which his brother and Ping Wang were unwilling passengers.

Williams heard his name mentioned as he vaulted over the wall on to the platform, and the next moment he recognized his friends.

"Well, this is a delightful surprise!" he exclaimed, as he grasped Charlie's hand.

"It's still more delightful for us," Fred declared.

"You've had a very rough time, I fear," said Williams, when he had shaken hands with his three friends. "You look almost like skeletons, every man of you. However, you shall soon have a good feed."

" Shall we open the gate? " Barton asked, when he and his colleagues had been introduced to Williams.

" Certainly," Williams replied; but when he saw how securely the gate had been barricaded, he knew that the task would be more than the half-starved defenders of the mission could accomplish.

" I'll call some of my men to do it," he said, and in a few moments twelve jovial, sunburnt, travel-stained sailors had climbed the ladder and entered the enclosure. Instantly the men, women, and children surrounded them, grasping their hands, and showering blessings on them.

" Come along, men," Williams shouted out. " Down with that barricade, and open the gates."

The sailors started their work at once. In a few minutes the barricade, which had taken the missionaries some days to build, was torn down, and the gates thrown open. Number One was the first person to enter

the enclosure. He carried a big bowl of cooked rice, which was probably loot, and, hurrying to the ladies and children, placed the tempting dish before them.

"Welly good," he declared, emphatically; "makee plenty stlong."

When every one had had as much as was safe after their long fast, Williams drew Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang aside. "I suppose you haven't succeeded in getting that treasure?" he said.

"No, but we got very close to it," Charlie replied, and then told him of their adventures in Kwang-ngan.

"You've been unfortunate," Williams admitted. "However, I'll see what I can do. We expect some Japanese troops here to-morrow, and as soon as they arrive we are all going to march on Kwang-ngan. Tell me exactly where the idol is."

"Let us go to Kwang-ngan with you," Charlie suggested.

"But, my dear fellows," Williams re-

plied, "you're not in fit state for any more fighting."

"It's only sleep we want," Charlie declared. "We shall be as fit as any one after we have had a good long rest."

"If that's the case, I shall be glad of your company; but you must turn in at once."

"Before we do that we want to know how it is that you are here. When we last saw you, you had no idea of going to China."

"Well, I'll soon explain that. My capture of that copter on which I found you and Ping Wang won the approval of the authorities, and, fortunately for me, I was able to effect another capture, about three weeks later. Soon afterward I received orders to go up to London, and in less than a week I was on my way to China to join my present ship."

Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang heartily congratulated their friend, but he cut them short by telling them that if they wanted to accompany him to Kwang-ngan they would

have to turn in at once, and get as much sleep as possible.

“ If that’s the case, good night,” Charlie replied, and all the three hurried away to their beds in the basement, and slept soundly.

When they awoke they found that the Japanese troops had arrived, and that the British sailors were to start within half an hour for Kwang-ngan. After a rapid but hearty breakfast they marched out, with the rifles at the shoulder, to report themselves to Williams, whom they found outside the enclosure inspecting the men. Some of the newly arrived Japanese soldiers had already been posted around the mission wall, and the Japanese flag flew, side by side with the Union Jack, over the gateway.

“ Well,” Williams exclaimed, cheerfully, as he shook hands with Charlie, “ do you still wish to come with us? ”

“ Certainly,” Charlie replied, speaking for all three of them.

“ Then you had better say ‘ good-by ’ to your missionary friends, for they must all start for Tien-tsin this morning. They will be safer there.”

Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang hurried back to the mission buildings, but Barton was the only one of their late comrades in danger who was not sound asleep. They bade farewell to him, and extracted a promise from him that when he next came to England he would visit them at Lincoln.

While they had been talking, Williams had marched his men off toward the town gate which opened into the road leading to Kwang-ngan. Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang ran after them and overtook them just as they were quitting the town. They fell in at the rear of the company. Nine of the ten miles which lay between Su-ching and Kwang-ngan were covered in about two hours and a half, and they proceeded more cautiously, but for some time met with no opposition, although, when they drew near

Kwang-ngan, they were surprised to find that it was a very formidable-looking place, bristling with big guns.

"They are not guns," Ping Wang declared, smiling. "They are simply circles which the Boxers have painted on the walls to represent guns, in the hope of frightening us."

"But I was told that they had two guns," said Williams.

"That is correct. One is mounted on either side of the gate."

Ping Wang had barely finished speaking when both guns boomed, and their range was excellent, the shells bursting among the sailors. One man was killed and six were wounded. Charlie was thrown to the ground, but, much to his surprise, he found on getting up that he was not hurt.

The sailors now advanced quickly, and the Chinese gunners being apparently unable to alter their range, the shells passed harmlessly over their heads.

The attacking party soon got to within three hundred yards from the town, and the Boxers lining the wall, having so far received no hurt, became reckless. A few of them fired their rifles, but three hundred yards is a long range for most Chinamen, and not one of them succeeded in doing any damage. Nevertheless, Williams considered that the time had arrived to give the Boxers a warning. He gave the order to his men to lie down and fire a volley. It was a splendid one, and the terror which it caused among the Boxers was almost comical. The uninjured men hid themselves instantly, and not a single threat or shout of defiance was heard from them as the sailors sprang to their feet and ran a hundred yards nearer to the wall.

They lay there unmolested for three or four minutes until the "advance" was again sounded. As they rushed forward, the Boxers opened fire upon them with rifles and bows and arrows, and three men fell.

But their comrades, breaking into a loud cheer, continued their advance, and arrived at the wall with but few casualties on the way. They had brought from Su-ching twelve long bamboo ladders, and these were speedily placed against the wall at a few yards distance from each other. The Japanese also had provided themselves with ladders.

At the signal from their officers, the men climbed nimbly up the ladders, and all along the south wall the fight became fierce. Many of the attacking party were shot before they reached the topmost rung, but their fall simply added to the determination of their comrades, and in a few minutes nearly a score of them had scaled the wall, and were engaged in a desperate hand-to-hand fight with the Boxers.

Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang were not among the first dozen to enter the town, as the sailors who had fixed the ladder by which

they wished to ascend declared that it was their right to be the first to mount it.

When the Chinamen found that they were unable to drive out the men who had entered the town, and that others were scrambling over the wall to their assistance, they turned and fled, closely pursued by the sailors. Within twenty minutes the whole English force held the village. Before long, Fred, Charlie, and Ping Wang found themselves close to the wall of Chin Choo's residence.

CHAPTER XXV.

“ Now’s our time to get the treasure,” Charlie said. “ The fighting is nearly at an end, and the sailors won’t want our help now.”

“ Come along, then,” Fred answered; “ and I hope that we shall do better this time than last.”

Much to their surprise they found that the gate was open.

“ Chin Choo has fled,” Ping Wang declared, on seeing that the gate was unprotected, and they heard later in the day that the rascally mandarin, after making a very warlike speech to his countrymen, had sneaked out of the town, and was on his way to Peking.

As Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang entered Chin Choo’s enclosure they were more ex-

cited than ever they had been during the siege of Su-ching, or the storming of Kwang-ngan; for they knew that in a few minutes they would discover whether or not their journey to China had been a fruitless one. Several of Chin Choo's servants, their pockets and arms loaded with loot, hurried out at the back of the house as Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang approached it. They did not interfere with the thieves, but the thought that they had, perhaps, already taken away the idol occurred to each of them. They quickened their speed, and ran up the veranda steps together.

"There is the idol!" Ping Wang exclaimed, excitedly; and Charlie and Fred saw a brass image standing in the corner of a room which opened from the veranda.

Ping Wang went down on his knees, and grasping the right forearm of the image, tugged at it. To the amazement of Charlie and Fred, he pulled the idol's arm forward from its body until it was in an almost hori-



"PING WANG EXHIBITED AN IMMENSE RUBY."

**THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY**

**ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS**

A

L

zontal position. Then, placing his fingers on the spot where the idol's hand had lain, he pushed to the right its crossed legs, and showed to Charlie and Fred that the brass pedestal on which the figure sat was practically a jewel-box.

"Marvellous!" Charlie muttered; but his and Fred's delight was greater still when Ping Wang took out of it a little piece of cloth, and, unrolling it, exhibited an immense ruby.

"There are at least thirty as good as this one," Ping Wang declared, joyfully; but, as he spoke, a noise was heard in Chin Choo's enclosure.

"Shut it up quickly," Charlie said; and just as Ping Wang had done so a middy rushed into the room, accompanied by four sailors.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, on recognizing them as friends of Williams. "What are you doing here?"

as possible. As long as you are in China you will run great risks of being robbed. I advise you to return to Su-ching early to-morrow morning, and make your way back to England. My instructions are to hold this town until I am reinforced, but it is quite possible that the Boxers will try to recover it before the reinforcements arrive. Therefore, the sooner you quit this place the more likely you will be to get away unhurt."

"I don't much like leaving you at a time like this," Charlie replied; "but I suppose we ought to. The question is, how are we to carry our treasure?"

"The best way," Ping Wang declared, "will be for us to divide it into three packages, and each take charge of one."

The packing being finished, the four friends sat down to have a chat. Of course they spoke chiefly of the Boxer rising, but they discussed also the latest news from the outside world, and finally talked of home.

"Now," Williams said, when they had

chatted for about an hour, "you had better turn in, for you must start as soon after day-break as possible. I should advise you to draw some of those rugs together, and sleep here. That's what I'm going to do."

The friends soon made up, on the floor, four comfortable beds. Williams was sound asleep a few minutes after lying down; but Charlie, Fred, and Ping Wang lay awake for fully an hour, so excited were they at having obtained the treasure for which they had come so far. However, they fell asleep eventually, but only, as it seemed to them, to be aroused almost immediately by Williams.

"Your breakfast is ready," he declared, cheerfully, "and your carriages are awaiting you. I have hired a palanquin and coolies for each of you, and some extra coolies to carry the idol, as Ping Wang wants that, too."

"I say, that will be travelling in style. How long have you been up?" Charlie said.

“ I went out four hours ago, and have just returned.”

Then the palanquins were brought to the foot of the veranda stairs.

“ Good-by, and God bless you, all three! ” Williams said, and shook hands heartily with his friends.

“ God bless you, old fellow! ” Charlie said; “ and don’t forget to look us up when you return to England.”

The procession of palanquins passed out through the streets and along the road to Su-ching. The bearers were hard-working fellows, and shuffled along, half-running and half-walking, at a pace which made the distance from Kwang-ngan appear very short to the travellers. On entering Su-ching, Ping Wang directed the bearers to carry them to the mission, but, on arriving there, a Japanese officer told them that Barton and his friends had started for Tien-tsin the afternoon before.

After remaining at Kwang-ngan for about

an hour Ping Wang hired fresh palanquins, and they resumed their journey. It was a very uneventful one, for the Boxers had been cleared out of that part of the country, the only exciting moment being when some Russian or Japanese sentry barred their progress. The arrival of an interpreter on the scene always resulted in the travellers being allowed to continue their journey.

On arriving at the river, they soon found a boatman to take them down to Tien-tsin, and thence they went straight to Hongkong, where they remained four days as the guest of their former host. In Hongkong they procured new clothes, and when they went aboard the homeward-bound steamer they felt, for the first time for many weeks, that they need not be ashamed of their appearance.

Fine weather and very agreeable fellow passengers made the voyage to England an enjoyable one, but, nevertheless, the Pages and Ping Wang were delighted when, at last,

the ship reached London. Mr. Page was waiting for his sons on the landing-stage, and was so pleased at seeing them back safe and sound that he almost forgot at first to ask them about their adventures. He was, naturally, delighted with their news.

As soon as possible the jewels were valued by a London diamond merchant, who looked at them very carefully, and, after some thought, offered a price which startled the Pages and Ping Wang. They gladly accepted the offer, and returned home in high spirits to Lincoln, where they enjoyed themselves thoroughly, in spite of being called upon several times a day to relate to various friends their adventures among the Boxers. After a week's holiday Fred went back to London to continue his medical studies, and Mr. Page then began to think what to do with Charlie.

"I have had enough trawling to last me for a lifetime," Charlie declared; so the

idea of putting him into a steam-trawler company was dismissed for good.

"Let us two start business together as merchants," Ping Wang suggested. "We could soon work up a good connection with China, I'm certain."

Charlie liked the suggestion, and Mr. Page having gone into the matter carefully, the firm of Page and Wang was started, and before long promises to be a prosperous one. Ping Wang decided to become a naturalized Englishman.

Their friend, Williams, so they learnt later, was publicly thanked by the commander-in-chief of the allied forces in China for conspicuous bravery and valuable services rendered on three different occasions.

THE END.

